WRESTLING FLYER
INTERVIEW COLLECTION #1

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INTERVIEW
- JERRY "THE KING" LAWLER
BY JOHN CLARK

Jerry "The King" Lawler has maintained one of the finest independent territories in the country for a long period of time, right in his own backyard, Memphis, Tennessee. United States Wrestling Association has stayed afloat while numerous promotions have come and gone. This organization is the only group in the wrestling business to have a live tv show each and every week. With Bill Watts entering the WCW, "The King" has many observations about what will become of the WCW and has many thoughts on how they can turn it around. A couple of weeks ago, Eddie Gilbert signed on with Memphis and the rumors have already started up about a possible return the Atlanta group for him. Jerry Lawler will now set aside all rumors and tell us the facts.

__JC:__ Right off the bat, there are rumors flying around about both Eddie Gilbert and you coming to the WCW now that Bill Watts has taken over. Are these rumors true?
__JL:__ No, I think probably what they figure is the fact that because Eddie and Watts are friends, that he might be going down there. First of all, I hate contracts, that's what has the business screwed up. That's what has really killed the WCW, if they could exchange talent and let guys come and go as they please with the old standard two-week notice that we used to have, everybody would be in a lot better shape. We don't make anybody sign any contracts when they come in here, we just except that if they want to leave, they give a two-week notice, then everything is fine. When Eddie came here, he assured us of that and if wants to go anywhere else, as long as you got a little bit of a notice, then there's no problem.

__JC:__ So he hasn't given you any kind of a notice or a verbal statement about him leaving the USWA?
__JL:__ Oh no.

__JC:__ If Bill Watts came to you with a nice offer, would you consider going to WCW?
__JL:__ No way, not ever. What could they offer me? I'm very happy in the position I'm in.

__JC:__ Now that Ole Anderson is in under Bill Watts, what do you think will happen to guys like Cactus Jack?
__JL:__ First of all, I think he's one of the worst things that ever happened to the wrestling business. Horrible. I would not use him on a dare. Obviously what they're using over there is the shits. If he was any good, he would be drawing money, but he's not, he's the shits. His work is phony looking, he takes those big goofy bumps. His interviews are just a cheap imitation of Randy Savage. His body's horrible looking, wrestles in the clothes, I don't like the gimmick. I don't even know the guy personally, I've met him a few times, I guess he seems like an alright guy. But, just as far as business wise, I think he's really terrible. But, they use a lot guys down there that are obviously killing their territory. Their problem is, if you look at who they use, it doesn't surprise me at all that they don't draw anything. If they give Watts control, then I think he'll do a lot better than anybody else has done. At least he'll try to push some guys with some charisma, that know a little bit about wrestling. Their tv show is hard to watch. They push guys that have absolutely zero charisma. They may be a hell of a wrestler, but it don't matter how good you are as a wrestler, if you don't have any charisma, you're the shits, you're useless. Terry Gordy and Steve Williams will not draw you one dime. Those guys might be great for what you call your smart fans, because they do all these big fancy moves and stuff, but they don't have any charisma, where the people would care to come and see them, because of their personality. They're great in Japan because of what they are. They can't make an interview, they can't talk, they're the shits on that, and they have no personalities, so that fits right in with the Japanese style. Over here, that's what has killed their territory. Dustin Rhodes and Barry Windham don't have an ounce of charisma between them. If they turn him, it don't matter how many times you turn him or which way you got him, they've got no charisma. More guys that will not draw you a dime in chinese money, I don't care how long they push them down the people's throats, are the Steiners. Your work is about 20% of your drawing ability, look at Jimmy Valiant, over his career has drawn more than all those put together and he can't work a lick. But, he's got charisma and he can talk. You got to talk the people into the arena. Your work don't mean shit unless you talk them into the arenas. Look at Dusty Rhodes, he has drawn a billion dollars in his career, I think he is a big asshole, a jerk and everything, but as a worker, he was always the shits. But, he had charisma and the ability to make a hell of an interview. His son doesn't have that, that's just not something that's handed down and it's not hereditary. The main guys they push are the guys that have no charisma. Lex Luger, not an ounce. Sting don't even have any, he's got the little gimmick and the facepaint and shit like that, but no charisma. I think the intelligence of the higher-ups is so much now that, hey we got to do like the WWF is doing, the bottom line is we're not making money and they are, well, that just can't be done. If Bill Watts went back to the thing, hey we're the NWA and we wrestle, but they were saying, forget that, we're the NWA and we're going to try to copy the WWF. We don't have the luxury of being able to sell dolls, toys, trinkets, and the merchandise that the WWF and WCW can sell and PPVs and make millions of dollars. All we can sell, the only we can make money and the only way we've been able to stay in business, is to sell wrestling tickets for the fans to come to the matches live. In order to do that, we have give them a lot of action and make it an exciting event. Those guys don't do that, their wrestling events are merely an excuse to sell merchandise. So they realize that at the arenas, they don't need to go out there and wrestle and have an exciting match all they need to do is go out there and pose and look like a walking, talking, breathing cartoon character. Then the kids will go buy a doll or a sleeping bag with a picture on it or something like that. I think that Watts and them down there now are to the point where they're going to have to go back and try to sell some wrestling to the fans.

Most of the independent organizations don't depend on selling merchandise, they depend on selling tickets to live events. Why do you think they're failing now?

JL: Well, there's three reasons. First, there is just a shortage of talent around. This can eventually be the downfall of the WWF and WCW, it's already killing the independents. There's nowhere to create any new talent, there's nowhere for guys to learn how to wrestle or to break into the business anymore. The WWF, they can't break in a young wrestler, they don't have the time to give an exposure to young talent or to get anybody started. They got to have a whole card of mega-superstar characters to be out there to sell their merchandise, same thing with the WCW. They have always in the past been able to sit back and drain and tap into the other organizations, either the independents or what few territories survived, they've been able to go in there and steal their big stars. They look around and see somebody drawing some money somewhere, and either the WWF or WCW would get in touch with them and say, hey come up here, we'll make you a lot of money, more money than you're making there. So they finally garnered up all of the decent talent in the country. Those guys (WWF, WCW) are all to the point where they're all overexposed. The public's appetite for something new and different is just voracious. They're always wanting something bigger and better, all the time. These guys are going to realize that there's nowhere to get new talent and much less the independents are stuck with guys that are either completely burned-out, cause they've been seen on the WWF and WCW for so long that they're just completely old news or either they're stuck with guys who shouldn't even be in the business, because they're not talented enough or they're not experienced enough. That's one reason the independents are failing and another reason is because they're under financed, it's an expensive proposition these days to try to maintain a territory that will draw money, that will get people to come to the live events. I think one of the reasons is the fact that the WWF has given the impression that the live events aren't exciting anymore. The third reason the independents are failing is because most of them are without tv exposure.

JC: One independent promoter, Joel Goodhart of the TWA out of Philadelphia, brought a big line-up of stars to the live arena shows and was able to bring a good deal of people out to them. However, why do you think he failed?

JL: I think Joel fell into the trap of trying to, and this is what is the main problem with independents, they look around and they don't try to do their own thing. Joel Goodhart started out doing his own thing and he was successful, but then it got to be where all he wanted to do was copy the WWF or the WCW. When Joel started out, he would have one or two established wrestlers on his card and the rest of the card were his guys from that area, they would go out there and bust their butts to give the people a heck of a show. Then it got to be where well, every time I got to top what I did last time, this next thing's got to be bigger and better. What happened was, before long, he's trying to bring twenty big stars. Another thing that has killed the business is guarantees in wrestling, that's the worst thing that has ever happened to professional wrestling. You won't be able to get many wrestlers to say that, but anybody that has anything to do with promotion will realize, and even in the long run if the wrestlers would sit down and analyze the situation, they would realize that it's bad too. When you got to guarantee somebody something, guarantee him a certain figure for wrestling, then that takes away their incentive to go out there and bust their butt and have a good match. You know, it's like being on welfare, why go get a job when I know I'm going to get free money anyway. Why go out there and bust my butt to have a good match and try to get people to come to the arena when I'm going to get my money whether there's one person there or whether there's ten-thousand people there. That is the mentality, I don't care who you're talking about, that is the prevailing mentality of, unfortunately, almost every person in the United States. Our society has gotten to where we want to do as little work for as much money as possible, and the wrestlers are no exception. When they are guaranteed, I don't care if they're guaranteed a $100 per match, or $500 a match, or $500,000 a year, if they know they got that money coming whether they work hard or not, I guarantee they're not going to work hard and they're still want their money. And those dumb-fucks are too stupid to realize that their cutting off their own noses and eventually once they peel all those promotions by going out there and laying on their asses, then those guarantees aren't going to be there anymore.

JC: One guy that is probably going to find that out is Jim Neidhart. I don't know why promoters would jump to get him booked on their cards.

JL: I don't either. He was always the shits. He started right down here with us. He was an ex-convict, he'd been in jail, and he used to play a little football, the guy came in and started here along with Rick Rude, one of first territories he ever worked, and he (Anvil) was the shits then and he never improved.

JC: How do you pay your wrestlers and avoid the guarantee?

JL: We go to all our guys and we say, here's the deal, we don't have any merchandise to sell, we don't have anyway to make money except to sell tickets to our events. We tell them you're not on any guarantee, you're going to get a percentage of the gate which consists of people we can sell wrestling tickets to. In order for those people to want and come see you guys live, we have got to assure them that they are going to be getting an exciting, ass-kicking show. If you give the people a fight, which is what we have been doing down here with the Moondogs, the other wrestlers on the card are saying, if we're going to be on the same card with these guys, we're going to have to go out there and bust our ass. The guys are going in there and they're having a hell of a match. We're drawing, last time I looked, we were one of the last territories left, we're still here. You don't have to have big names, as long as you got somebody that will go out there and let the people see a good fight.

JC: Recently, you lost two of your top stars, Kamala and KoKo B. Ware, to the WWF. Why do you think Vince McMahon is interested in them?

JL: I think the steroid situation had a lot to do with it. Vince McMahon is not dumb by any stretch of the imagination. He is going to look around and he is going to find him some guys that can draw that aren't on steroids. The steroid freaks and the Road Warriors and guys like that, now I'm not knocking them personally, but they were the worst thing that ever happened to this business because through their big push that they got, all of a sudden, the general perception of the wrestlers was, I don't have to be a great wrestler. Those guys (LOD, Road Warriors) improved 10,000% from the time they started, when they started, they were the drizzling shits and they'll tell you they were, but they looked so impressive, that the promoters pushed them. That gave the indication to all the other wrestlers, hey, if I can look like those guys, I'll make a million dollars in wrestling. Unfortunately, the stupid promoters all of a sudden said, lets push the big steroid freaks, and then you have several years there of all of these guys that couldn't wrestle their way out of a wet paper bag. Whether they had any charisma or drawing power whatsoever, if they were shot full of steroids and have big, bulging muscles all over their body, they were the main event, they were what was pushed. That just about killed the business and it put a lot of guys and a lot of promoters out of business. Now, with all of the negative publicity, Vince McMahon is going to find himself some guys that can draw and that do have charisma and that aren't on steroids. And Kamala is an excellent example of that, here's a big guy who has got a great gimmick, that we gave him, and will draw you some money, and obviously, he's not on steroids.

JC: Have you had to cut back on any expenses because of the tough economical times?

JL: On Tuesdays, we're in Louisville, Kentucky, I used to fly every week to Louisville. They had a great connection and they had great prices, it was like $69 from Memphis to Louisville, and I could leave hear at like 4pm and get there at like 6:30pm, and boy it was just perfect. What happened was, a few years ago, Northwest Airlines came into Memphis and made Memphis a hub. They did basically the same thing that the WWF does in the wrestling business, they came in and they forced almost all the other airlines out. The only plane to get to Louisville is on Northwest and instead of being $69 one way, it's $250, just ridiculous, so we drive (370 miles).

JC: Do you think your promotion will survive over the next few years, during what should be a hard time for the biz?

JL: Do you know why we can always survive? It's because we are not trying to copy the WWF and the WCW, we're just here and we've always done our little thing and we've got a good little territory here and I've been wrestling here for over twenty years, and I've made a great living. I'm standing in the middle of my $300,000 home on one of the nicest streets in Memphis, TN. I got a real nice comfortable living, life is good to me. I don't relish getting on a plane and flying all over the country and living out of a suitcase and being in a different city every single night. I like it fine just the way I got it and this can go on forever, simply because we are content with what we have. We're not going to try to be like the WWF or WCW, we're going to stay right here and run our little mom and pop organization and we are always going to be here.

JC: What is your relation to the Honky Tonk Man?

JL: He's my first cousin. His father and my mother are brother and sister. We really have very, very little contact. He lives right here in Memphis, we contacted him about working here and he showed no interest whatsoever. I think there might be a little bit of professional or family jealousy. I remember it like it was yesterday, cause his dad, my Uncle Roy, came to me one day at a Christmas party we were having and said, could you help Wayne (Honky), he really wants to get into wrestling. I didn't even realize that he had even been doing it. He had started wrestling around some of these little organizations, this is years and years ago. My Uncle Roy asked us if there was anyway we could help him out, and I said, yeah, I didn't even know he was doing that. He got in touch with me and I got him booked here in our territory, got him legitimately started in wrestling. Then eventually he left here, went up to Canada. Vince McMahon said, I don't think he really ever resembled Elvis or anything, but he probably said to Wayne, we're going to put an Elvis impersonator gimmick on you. I don't think Wayne was ever really crazy about that.

JC: What is your opinion of Hulk Hogan, are you friends?

JL: Who knows if your friends with these guys or not, I'm there's just so much back-stabbing and that kind of stuff in this business, but I've always gotten along good with Hulk. How can you fault Hulk Hogan, I mean that guy has got to be one of the best. He's not a great worker, but he is great at what he's done, he's been used properly, and then he's conducted himself well. Hell, who has ever drawn more money than Hulk Hogan, nobody. You can't, it's impossible to replace him, the original, he will always be the original, and for a long time anything that comes along will be considered second best.

JC: Have you ever had any problems while working for a promoter?

JL: When I was down in Dallas with World Class, I had no problems with them, of course Jerry Jarrett was one of the partners at that time and everything was fine. I never had any problems whatsoever with Joel Goodhart, nobody, ever.

INTERVIEW PAUL ROMA

JC: How did you first get started in pro wrestling?

PR: I broke in at the school in Orange, CT. Tony Altamore actually ran it and it was just a rip-off deal. I gave him $1,500 for three months and they threw me to the wolves. The school continued on and just up until recently, a new owner bought the gym out, which was this lady Carolyn Syers and they were trying to set her up and rip her off, telling her they needed money to run a show. When she confronted me with it, I said you don't need that kind of money to run a show. They were telling her, "I need $10,000 to pay for the talent," and that's ridiculous. I explained things to her and she was tired of Mario Mancini ripping the guys off. She didn't know anything about wrestling, so as far as she was concerned, Mario Mancini was the trainer. Now Mario

Mancini's only done jobs his whole life. He's never worked a circuit, so how can he ever teach anybody anything, if he doesn't know anything. Well, After I got out of Altamore's school, Mr. Fuji took me in. I started traveling with him and I'd work in the ring before the shows and eventually he got me my break, where I started to work and then it took off from there.

JC: How did you first get approached by Mr. Fuji?
PR: I just showed up at one of the shows and he just told me like any other professional, "Hey kid, you look good, can you work?" I said no, but then he asked me if there were things I could do, like can I go over the ropes backwards, can I come off the top, this, that, and the other thing. I said no, I've never been taught anything, so it was just a rip-off. The reason I got into wrestling, was to help handicapped kids, be a role model and that's where I stand now. I'm the chairman for the St. Jude Foundation.

JC: How was it being a jobber all that time and then how did you get associated with Jim Powers?
PR: Back then, one of the top bookers, I believe it was the vice-president of the company at the time, had said to me, "You're never going to be a great wrestler, you're kind of small, this, that, and the other thing." So I was like, oh well, that's the way you feel, I'm not going to argue with this guy, I'm just going to do whatever I do on my own and I did, I stuck with it. As far as Jim Powers was concerned, Jimmy and I thought we'd be a good team, so we approached them on the idea. They didn't like it, but finally they said okay. So they hooked us up and it just seemed to me, maybe I'm wrong, but it seemed to me like I was doing all the work. Jimmy just became a total screw-up.

JC: At that time, were there any sexual advances made by the executives offering to boost your team in the WWF?
PR: There was speculation, there was rumors that Jimmy was approached and he had quit. Then it got back to Vince that this guy quit because his guys were harassing him. Then they brought him back in Las Vegas, they put us together against Demolition and we did, as they wanted to see if the crowd responds, but Jimmy had said to me, that's what it was (a sexual advancement was Jim's reason for quitting). So they threw us together to keep his mouth shut. The team didn't work out though. I know I was late, but not at that time, getting to a show. One thing I wanted to do was to be on time, because I was getting my first break. He didn't care after a while, he was late, he just thought he was this big superstar. Well, he hung around with the British Bulldogs and they were in a position at the time where Vince wouldn't fire them. I said to him one day, you're not a British Bulldog, we're the Young Stallions, man, we ain't giants. We got to go out there, we got to fly, we got to do what we got to do. He goes, "Ahh, you're late." I said, I'm not that late. We're talking about ten minutes late compared to an hour or two hours late, when the shows' almost over, or when I got to run out and wrestle a single or wrestle with somebody else against a tag team because he's not to be found. He put the blame on me, actually little did I know, he was blaming me the whole time, and somebody brought it to my attention when they broke us up. I said well, we'll wait and see, the cream will come to the top, and that's when I got my push.

JC: Do you think one of the major reasons you got the push and he never got one was because of his no-showing and latenesses to shows and his attitude that it didn't matter?
PR: Oh, there's no doubt. Matter of fact, when I approached Vince and I said, let me turn on Jimmy, we'll do a deal. He said to me, "Well, I don't know, do you think it will work?" I said, yeah, what a good issue. He said, "I know it's a good issue, but do you think you could work with Jimmy, against him, will he work with you?" I said, it's money, why would he not? I just didn't understand what he meant and then finally he came out and said it, "There would be a problem, would Jimmy want to do the job for you?" I said, Vince, you're the boss, he has to do whatever you tell him to do, right? He said, "Yeah I know, but the matches could stink, this, that, and the other thing." But I ran into some problems with Jimmy.

JC: Then you got your push and how did the Power & Glory tag team form with Hercules?
PR: Herc and I traveled together for a long time even when I was a good guy and he was a bad guy. They were happy, as long as we were to Kay Fabe it when we got to the shows. They were happy because Herc was training, looking good, getting to shows on time. Herc had mentioned to Vince, "Please put me with this guy, man, he's good for me." So I came up with the idea of Power & Glory, came up with the name.

JC: Was there a legal problem involving who has the rights to the name, Power & Glory?
PR: First they tried not to give me the rights to Power & Glory and they tried to say it was their idea. I told their attorney, I created Power & Glory, you're not taking that from me and you're sure the hell ain't taking my name. I gave them my royalties in exchange for my name, they would only give me Glory. So I said the hell with it, I've got Glory and that's all I needed for boxing and as long as they don't have Power & Glory, who cares. But they swore that they created the name and I said, you go talk to Vince and he'll tell you who created the name.

JC: What was the main reason for the breakup of Power & Glory?
PR: They didn't want to give us a push. They were trying to keep us down and they couldn't. They gave us a taste of the belts at Nassau Coliseum and naturally we had to give them back to the Harts. Then Herc was like, "This could be it," and I said, yeah, everybody's talking, everybody knows we're running with the Harts, and whoever runs with the champs are going to go against them in the Slam or WrestleMania or whatever. Then they pulled that stunt where they brought in the Nasty Boys and told us to get dropped out and leave them. I said, that's bullshit, we broke our ass. Then they put no steam behind us and Legion Of Doom, they

put nothing there. So we did our overseas trip and they gave me like two months off and I had gotten a call from one of the people in their office and they said, "Hey, you're not booked." I said, what are you talking about, I'm booked. They said, "You're not booked after SummerSlam." I said, they told me they were going to give me just a month off cause Hogan was making a movie. They said, "No, you're not booked at all." So I went and talked to Vince and he gave me the big runaround, he said, "Well, we need new faces,....." I said, we gave you the best team you ever had. He goes, "Well that's your opinion." I said, what's your opinion? He goes, "Well some people beg to differ, like some of the agents." I said, well they're full of shit and bring them in here and I'll tell them. I told him, you never put any heat behind us, we gave you the best matches every night. I said, did you have a problem with our matches? He goes, "Well no, but I didn't see you every night." I said, so what, we broke our asses for you, this is horseshit the way I'm being treated, I busted up my body for this damn company. I said, I used to fight with Herc because he wanted to stick with you and I told him that you were a bunch of horseshit. Herc said, "No, no, Vince is okay." I gave him the benefit of the doubt. But look, I was right the whole time, you treated us like shit. Then I said, Vince you f_____ me man, I hope it feels good. I told him, I gave you six good years and I broke my ass every night, now you're keeping these guys who get a hangnail and they need a week off. I've been in six years, I missed only one day, there ain't a wrestler alive who can say they had the same track record. I said, I want my release. He said, "Oh, I'll give it to you." Then they jerked me around for I don't know how long. One of the comments in the release was that I couldn't say anything about the WWF. That's against the Constitution, freedom of speech, you can't stop me from talking.

JC: Did you want to get out of wrestling entirely?

PR: Yeah, well what happened was when I was overseas, Pat Patterson approached me. He said, "Oh Paul, I've always liked you, you're a hell of a wrestler." I was listening to the horseshit, I'm saying, oh yeah right. He said, "Take a little time off, then what we're going to do is bring you back and just go wild with you as a single, you got the looks, you got the moves." I said, Pat, I'm not cutting off Hercules, man. I mean besides being my partner, he's family and I don't work that way. I told him, you had me, you had your chance to do something with me, you blew it, your loss, I'm tired of you guys f______ me over. I killed myself for you guys, I crippled myself, I'm 100% medically disabled, I could get a damn doctor's statement to prove that. I kept myself clean, I never got caught with drugs like all these other guys, they're failing piss tests and everything else. I said, before you guys destroy me, I'm getting out, I'm leaving with a good name, cause the people remember me for breaking my ass in the ring and being a damn good wrestler and that's how I'm leaving. So they never called me again. They were going to bury our tag team and I wasn't going to let that happen.

JC: Did they stop you from doing the charity work you wanted to do?

PR: Yes, I talked to him, I said, Vince, this ain't an ego trip for me, I have a sister with Downe Syndrome, I said, I'm trying to help these kids, this hits home for me. He said, "Nothing, nothing, we have our people,....." He didn't want to hear it. It was a money-making scheme for him, he needed people that he could make money from. Some people called up my dad and told him, "We want to use your son for this function." My father called me and said, "What is going on these days." I said, I'm off those three days, it's perfect, but you got to call the office, when they clear it with the office, I can do it. My dad calls the office and they told him, "Oh, Roma's working, he's not in town, he's in California that day." My father calls me back and said, "What the hell, you make me look like a fool." I said, what do you mean, I'm off those days, I'll be with you those three days, what are you kidding me. This happened more than once, and finally I said the hell with him, and I started doing them and I was doing interviews without asking them. This business isn't an ego trip for me, I got into it to make money and hopefully build a sports therapy complex for these kids. I tell you, I'm probably not the most Catholic, but the good Lord kept my name alive. I've been off tv for ten months and wherever I go, people are like, "Hey man, I know you, you're Roma, I don't see you no more." How are they going to remember you after ten months, it's God keeping my name alive. I did good and good is coming back to me. I've got my sports wear, Manimal Wear, coming out next week. I told my brother-in-law, we're going give portions of it to charity, otherwise you can't be involved. He doesn't have a problem with that and I think it's going to go well. I don't need that much money to live on, but when you work in these hospitals and you make these people, you don't have enough money in the world to make you feel that way. I had a boy who was 14 at the time and he needed a new heart. I visited him in the hospital and I gave the kid a Glory shirt and I told him the story behind Power & Glory, cause strength was Power, and God was Glory. So strength in God gives you Power & Glory. I'm not saying I was God, don't get me wrong, that was just the name. I laid it on him, and I said here's a Glory shirt, you can't get these anywhere. I brought Hercules in and the nurses ran in because they thought he was having problems cause he was blue on his chest and everything, he got so excited. I told him, once you get your new heart, you've got to pull through, otherwise you destroy everything that Glory stands for, you got to have the strength and the Glory. Well this kid, I told him, don't take this shirt off, and this kid wore his shirt.... Now this kid is working out with weights and playing tennis, everything, with his new heart. Like I told my wife, that made my whole life. That's my fulfillment and these guys (several other wrestlers) they're horseshit, they'll walk out of there and say, "Oh we got to go see these f_____ retards." I listened to these guys in the car, four guys one day talk while on the road, about retard this, and that, and the other thing. I waited and when they got done, I said, I have a sister that's retarded. Then they're like, "Oh, I'm sorry." I said, you guys make jokes about it, why, because your kids are okay? They are a bunch of phonies, out of a hundred guys, maybe ten of them are down to earth guys, stand-up guys, the rest are a bunch of phonies. The only ones that make them handicapped or retarded are us, like so-called normal people, because I've seen my sister treated different. If you walk in and you're depressed, you make them worse. But those guys are not real men, they're in this thing and all they care about is themselves, but hey, that's them.

JC: Switching the subject, were you ever forced into or pushed into taking steroids by your employers?
PR: No, I had to get them shot into my back because I broke my neck, they were shooting them into my spine, my elbows, so I could get fluid into my knees. I was in this business for a reason, like I said before, and nothing was going to stop me. I did it to stay in the business.

JC: Did Pat Patterson ever approach you in a sexual manner?
PR: Yes, and it happened right in his own home. I was over there with some of his friends and people that I knew from the company. We got together because we wanted to become better acquainted. During the party, I was inside the house with Pat and his friend, Louie (Pat's boyfriend). Pat sat down next to me on the couch and started telling me about that if I played around with a certain executive, my career would advance. He kept telling me, "Do you understand what I'm saying Paul?" I was like, yeah sure, but I never did anything about it and he never mentioned it again.

JC: What do you think you would have accomplished if you had accepted his offer?
PR: Me & Herc would have been tag team champs, no doubt about it. To this day, Herc still teases me about it and says to me, "If you would have only taken that piece of ass, we would have been champs."

JC: What's in the future for Paul Roma? How is your boxing career going?
PR: Yesterday was the first time I wrestled in six months and that was for charity. I probably won't work many independents. If the boxing is still going well, I'm not going to walk away from that. I could in one respect do both. Bo Jackson did it, it would bring a lot of publicity. Right now my record in boxing is 2-1 with 2 knockouts. I submitted to HBO for me to fight Mark Gastineau, we thought that would be pretty interesting, him being a football player and me being a wrestler. Now we're just waiting for a reply. I thought it would be good, interesting, right? Now I'll be fighting in mid-August we're looking at.

JC: You must be training really hard now as you lost a lot of weight. How does it feel now to be off the roids?
PR: Oh yeah it feels great, now I don't really have to worry about anything like passing tests and it just lifts a thing off your head. You don't have to hide anything anymore.

WRESTLING FLYER INTERVIEW WITH HOSSEIN KHOSROW VAZIRI

BY *JOHN CLARK*

Khosrow Vaziri was most famous in his career as the Iron Sheik and most recently wrestled as Colonel Mustafa. He was released from the WWF recently and is currently looking for work on the independent circuit. He will most likely work as the Iron Sheik once again.

JC: What prior training or athletics did you participate in before you became a professional wrestler?

IS: First, I was on the All-Country Iranian team for freestyle and Greco-Roman in the National Iranian High School. After that I was in the Iranian army for two years. Then I worked for the National Iranian Television for three years. After that I came to Minnesota with the Olympic coach, Mr. Allan Rice. He had invited me, so I came to Minnesota and I was an amateur at that time. I was helping Mr. Allan Rice for Greco-Roman in Munich, Germany in 1972. Before I became pro, I had my team which they called the MN Wrestling Club and my team was five or six time champion of AAU amateur athlete union. Also myself, I am a four-time AAU champion. I found out that in amateur, there was no money except for the winner, so I decided to turn professional. So I started in Minnesota to be a professional wrestler after my last Munich, Germany Olympic game in 1972, at the end of 1972. I love professional wrestling very much and I did excellent because, I don't have to talk about myself, intelligent people know all my life I was freestyle, Greco-Roman, and most of all, professional. I went from Minnesota, then all over the world, till I became Turner TBS TV Champion, and Mid-Atlantic champion, at that time George Scott was the promoter. I was also Canadian heavyweight champion, till I made it to the WWF tag team champion and also single, before Hulk Hogan, I beat Bob Backlund. I did very good, I'm happy about it, but the last couple years have been nothing special, just business for me. Still I can't quit, I'm training hard, I have a little gym in the backyard, I was training before and it's 90 degrees in Georgia. I'm really training hard to get ready again, I hope I can come back one more time.

JC: You brought up the match with Bob Backlund where you won the WWF Championship. Was there a problem that night with Backlund, like he refused to give up the belt? Did you have to shoot on him (not pulling the punches, where the match becomes a real fight- Steiners are famous for it) to follow through with the promoter's plans?

IS: It was a shoot because Bob Backlund was one of the great amateur and professional wrestlers in this country. He didn't want to do the job. I think before that match, he hurt his shoulder, so I had a little bit more advantage to go out there and shoot and try and get that belt back. He didn't want to drop the belt and so I had to go out there and shoot and portend my reputation and background. So I had to take advantage of him. People know that in my background, shooting was a little bigger than Bob Backlund, so that way I have to go shoot to get the belt.

JC: Is that why he was phased out after that, because he didn't want to cooperate?

IS: Exactly.

JC: Could you please tell us about what happened to you after you were arrested with Jim Duggan in New Jersey?

IS: Well Hacksaw Jim Duggan was driving and I was the passenger and it's against the law in New Jersey if somebody has a beer in the car. It was for a beer and marijuana and maybe some of the other things you've heard. For this reason, we were suspended. I went to Richview Institute in Georgia, like a rehab. Mr. McMahon Jr. put me in there and he paid for everything. After that I became very clean and I got sober and since that I didn't touch that. I respect Vince for that, his father and himself was always good to me. I was there one month and I'm clean now, I quit everything. I'm very happy about that. Now all the tests I take, I pass the tests. Also about steroids, a long time ago, before we didn't have tests, once in a while I take. But since we have tests, I quit all of them, no more. Maybe all my life, two, three times I used it, not very often. In my country, we didn't have that stuff, everything was natural. But when I came to this country, some people gave it to me, but I didn't know what it was. Maybe all together, two, three times I took it. When I started in the business, I was 175 pds or 180 pds and I had a rough time gaining weight, and I'm talking about 1968, 1969. The two, three times I used it (roids), that helped a little bit to gain weight, but I didn't use it steady all year long.

JC: How do you feel about your recent stint as the character Colonel Mustafa?

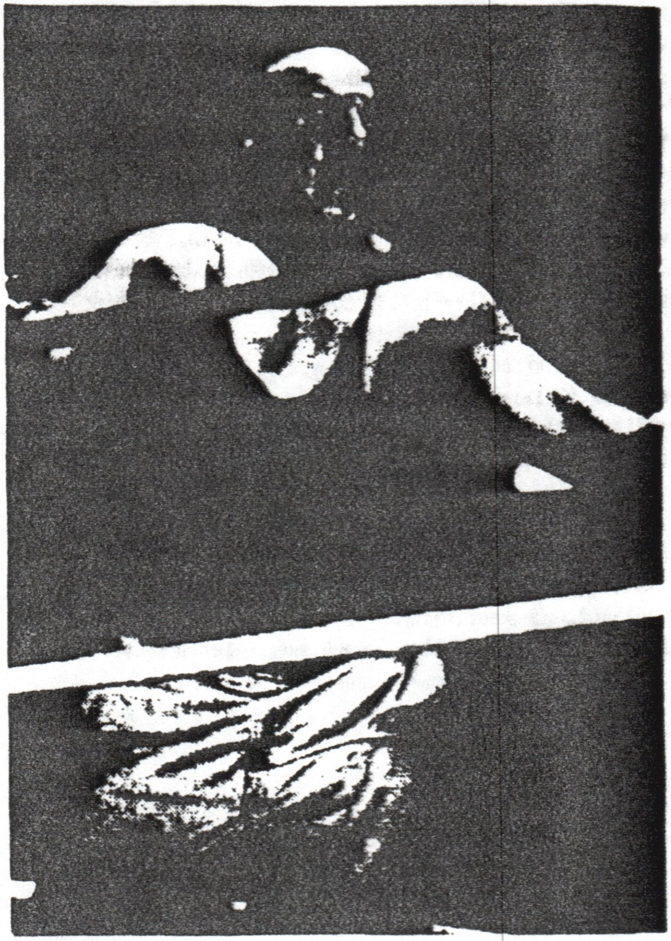
IS: That was Vince McMahon, my boss told me to do it and I did it.

JC: Do you think it had a negative effect on your career?

IS: Some people think it wasn't good for the Iron Sheik to be Col Mustafa, but at least I had a job and I was happy about it. You never know, maybe some day I'll come back as the Iron Sheik.

JC: Do you have any resentment towards Vince because of the fact that they used as Col Mustafa for a very short period of time to be an accessory for his war gimmick, and now he just kind of dumped you when the thing was over?

IS: Exactly, I don't have to say it, you're smart yourself, you know what it was about. I'll just say, I can knock down the company and Vince, but I leave it to the people to decide if it was good or bad. At least I had a job and I was happy about it, Vince gave me a last chance. I respect the man for that and I'll do my best again to be a perfect professional this time. I hope I can go back again in WWF or TBS or wherever, I have to be much better than I was before, so I'm training hard. I hope Mr. McMahon will one more time take me back, as Iron Sheik, as Col Mustafa, or be a manager. I hope I can get work somewhere.



EDITOR: For wrestlers such as the Iron Sheik who really don't have training in any other fields, it is extremely tough to find good jobs. In the wrestling industry today, there is not much room for the boys once they leave a major organization. One moment Sheik was earning good money with the WWF, the next moment he's left without a job. The wrestling business is a very good place to make money while you're in it, but once you leave, it becomes a nightmare to find money in other places.

WRESTLING FLYER INTERVIEW WITH JIMMY "SUPERFLY" SNUKA

BY JOHN CLARK

JC: What were you interested in when you were younger and then how did you get involved with wrestling?

JS: I was born in the Fiji Islands and I was raised in Hawaii. Mostly when I was growing up in Hawaii, I usually liked to watch football and baseball games. I was starting out in bodybuilding, and where I worked out at, Vince's wrestlers used to come and work out at, and so that's how I got interested in it. I met Dean Ho at the gym and he helped me get interested. I had to go to a wrestling school and learn how to wrestle and learn how to do all the basic wrestling stunts. This was in Honolulu, when they had some wrestling schools going, so I took advantage of it.

JC: Where did you go when you first came over to the states to wrestle?

JS: I started in Portland, OR, with Don Owen. I was there for seven years from 1970-1977, it was the best time I ever had in the business. I really enjoyed it. Also when I was in Portland, I used to go back and forth to San Francisco with Roy Shires and then I used to go down to Dallas, TX, as I was down there for six months. After that, I went to Charlotte, NC, the promoter there at the time was George Scott. Right from Charlotte, I went to New York (WWF) the big one. My "Superfly" (leap off top rope) really got over famous. I first came to the WWF in 1983, I believe. I think I stayed for about three years. I had to leave after that because of traveling a lot and the body needs to take a break for a while. Then I was up in AWA for a while. Then Col DeBeers pushed me from the top rope down to the concrete floor and it really busted me open. That's a lot of punishment on the body. After that I just went back home, back to Hawaii, and rested for a while, until I recuperated and then I started to travel to Japan.

JC: It's surprising that a superstar of your caliber never got a title in the WWF, was there any reason why they never gave you a belt?

JS: There were times when things were promised to me, but when old man Sr. died and his son took over, a lot of things changed around. But that's the way business goes.

JC: Some time before you came back to the WWF, Vince McMahon publicly called you a "basket case." How do you feel when a guy you worked for says something like that?

JS: To me, a word is only a word. Everybody says everything else, but you always got to be positive about everything. Like I said, that's business and that's the way it goes. You can't help that.

JC: What made you come back to the WWF?

JS: I was promised things to come back. When I came back things were promised to me that just didn't happen. Like I said, it's business. But I had a good time, I enjoyed it and I'm still loving it.

JC: Near the end of your stay in the WWF, you were doing a lot of jobs for some guys who many feel didn't have the ability or even deserve to be in the ring with you. However, a lot of people don't understand that you were working twice as hard to put him over. Could you comment on that?

JS: Well you know brother, I'm always like a teacher and it took pleasure for me to go out there and wrestle like that and teach these kids and these type of people. But people, they know, it's a great entertainment and it's my sport that I love very much right now and I enjoy it.

JC: Out of all the promotions you've been, which one was you're favorite?

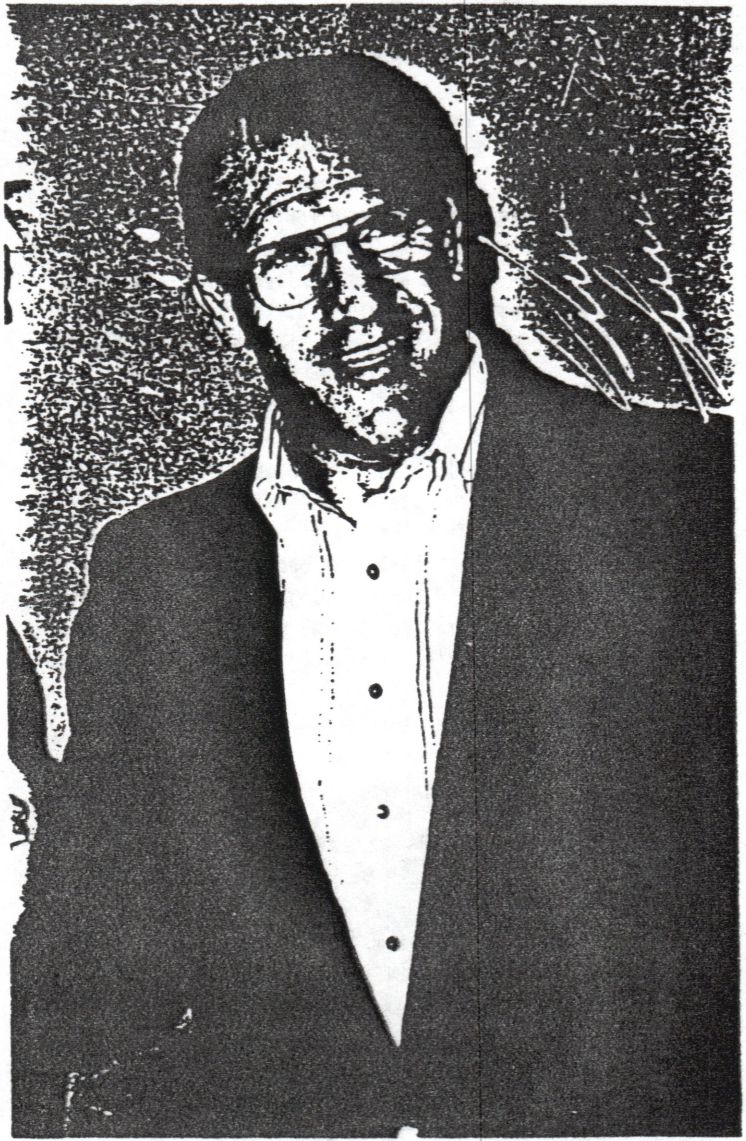
JS: Most likely in Portland, OR, but I guess all over the world is important, especially in our kind of business. It's always nice to travel to different places. I like to visit countries and meet a lot of different people and see new things. It's a very good experience, it's like going to school.

JC: What are you doing these days and what's in the future for "the Superfly?"

JS: Well I'm just sitting by and going around to different places wherever I can go. I think all the people in the world should get a chance to see "the Superfly" one more time. I'm doing some shows out there (his residence- Salt Lake City, UT), fund-raisers for the high schools for the baseball, wrestling, football teams. I enjoy doing those things for the high schools and it helps the kids, and I love doing things for those kids. It's always nice to help other people and teach them things that they would like to know.

A FLYER INTERVIEW WITH 'THE LIVING LEGEND' BRUNO SAMMARTINO

It gives The Wrestling Flyer Newsletter great pleasure to bring the Living Legend, Bruno Sammartino to you in a full length interview. The man from Abruzzi, Italy, is considered by many to be the greatest professional wrestler in history. He held the WWWF Championship for over ten years. He is one of the most honest and respected individuals that can be found in wrestling today. He is a class act and has always taken great pride in what he does best, wrestling. He was once very proud of the sport, but now he is very saddened about what is going on in wrestling today. He would like to see wrestling return to the way it once was. One thing is known, as Bruno's opinions and thoughts will be valued by wrestling fans in generations to come. His personality will be restored in every wrestling fans' mind. The Flyer hopes you enjoy the following fascinating interview with the man, Bruno Sammartino.



WF: Could you please tell us how you got started in pro wrestling.

BS: After I came over from Europe, I started training with the weights, I went to a six month language school but then I went to Shandley High School, that's a high school here, they had no wrestling team, but one of the coaches over there was good friends with a guy named Rex Perry, who was the wrestling coach at the University of Pittsburgh. He arranged for me to go to the Pitt Fieldhouse at the University of Pittsburgh. I used to go from Shandley High School, after I got out of school, and I used to walk a couple of miles walk and I would go to the Pitt Fieldhouse and workout with the Pitt wrestlers. So I would do that three days a week and every other day and every other day, I'd be pumping iron, because I was trying to gain size & strength. I continued to do that for years, finally I got up to about 265-270, where I got good in weights, where I was competing in both Olympic lifting and power lifting, but I maintained working out my workouts up at Pitt. Then, 1959, I was in Oklahoma City, where I was competing in the national weightlifting championships and when I came back, Bob Prince who use to be the voice of the Pittsburgh Pirates, he had his own television show and he invited me on his show, as I knew him, to talk about my winning that contest and along the way, he asked me if I was still going up to the Pitt Fieldhouse for the wrestling, cause he knew my love for wrestling too. While this was going on, Rudy Miller, who was working for Capital Wrestling, that was before it became the WWWF, he saw the show and he contacted me to some people, met with them, and told them yeah that it was my ambitions to become professional wrestler. I went to Washington, DC, where Vince McMahon and his partner, along with Rudy Miller, worked out there for two months at a place called the Capital Arena and then I got my first professional match.

WF: When Vince, Jr. took over the promotion from Vince, Sr, did you see the promotion changing then?

BS: Well, I retired in 1981. In the latter part of 1983 or the beginning of 1984, that's when Vince McMahon, Sr, who unfortunately had an incurable disease and he was dying and Jr., I don't know how it took place, but than Jr. took over. Years ago, because some of us thought that he (Jr.) was rather bizarre in different ways, we used to kid around and say, boy could you imagine if this guy ever took over his dad's business, what the heck would become of professional wrestling. There were remarks like that being made, but when he took over and he contacted me, I think it was the beginning of August of 1984, and he more less painted a picture, best I can recall, that he wanted to keep in his father's tradition and who better to more less be in the organization, maybe a little advisor, besides being a color commentator, than Bruno Sammartino, who had been in the organization for so long. I don't know why in the world I believed the guy, but I came back as a color commentator and it didn't take very long to see that there were going to be drastic changes and of course, I didn't like it and it depressed me as time went on as to why other people were calling him a genius. What I believed and I spoke to different people about was that it appears that way now because of all this bizarreness, it's attracting a lot of attention, but in reality, it's chasing the real wrestling fans away because they don't buy this and these present fans that are coming in for all this, there not going to be the lasting fans, there not going to be the fans that keep coming back. I remember when I was wrestling and go to Madison Square Garden, Boston Garden, or Philadelphia, where ever, and as far as my eyes would take me, I would see those same familiar faces. I said we've lost those and these new fans, they're not going to be like those fans, and some people disagreed with me and thinking that I was living in the past and refused to see the future, but I absolutely never believed that this was going to be a long time success and I predicted that in a matter of 5-6 years that you would see a drastic nose dive and I think it's just about coming that because the bizarreness that he brought into the game, I knew that they would loose what I call the real fans and they did.

WF: What are some of the differences between the promotion when you worked for Vince Sr., and when you worked for Vince, Jr.?

BS: When I worked for Vince, Sr., I don't want to give the impression that everything was peaches and pie and everything was rosy, there were things even back then that I know myself I did not like, I used to discuss with Vince McMahon, the old man as we called him, because of some, for example gimmicks I didn't buy, I never liked the gimmicks in wrestling because I felt that all they did was bring criticism to the game, I felt that that's not what the people really payed to see. I used to argue that if they were of such value, why was it that, for example, I was on top and not they. If they he so believed that there was such value in them, why not have them as headliners, which he would do. So, there was some of that stuff going on so I don't want paint a picture that there wasn't. But, in comparison, very little. Take what's happened since he (Jr.) took over. First of all, as far as gimmicks go, almost everybody has a gimmick, whether it's painted faces or martian like outfits, or for a while the Bulldogs with their dog and somebody with the parrot, snake with Jake the Snake, and for a while there was even a little crocodile that Steamboat had. For the almighty dollar, it seems like there's no limit, for example when the war was breaking in the Middle East, it seemed like they tried to capitalize with the Sgt Slaughter and Hogan running around with the flag and he's swearing that he's going to beat this traitor in Wrestlemania. It's just like, no scruples, just disgusting. And then of course, in my day, I've seen some guys with some bad habits, maybe like to drink too much, which of course is a terrible thing because alcohol can I guess be as dangerous as drugs. But, unless I was being very naive, I really didn't see that many people that were abusing alcohol, there were some, but I didn't see drugs, then all of a sudden with McMahon this steroid situation was really rapid and other drugs as well. It just became a very ugly, ugly business and when they say that it's family entertainment and they gear it towards the children, that's the saddest, because these kids that look at these guys and want to be like them, they are aware of the steroids and so it encourages the young kids to get involved with steroids. It's bad for the kids, but for the business itself, it's become such a cartoon show that nobody, I mean nobody takes it seriously. Regardless of what anybody says, years ago a great portion of the people took it much more seriously, it was evident by some of the things that I personally experienced, for example, when Zbyszko and I wrestled they had to escort him, not only in and out of the ring, but to and from the arena. When Stan Hansen broke my neck, people were so angry at this guy that he'd have to have an escort to the arena and back home and what have you. People did take it seriously, and now, it's like a cartoon show and also in my day a lot of the guys did display a lot more wrestling. Today, you see just about zero, the wrestling part of it is non-existent. I brawled, but I also wrestled. If somebody saw some matches with myself from films and say, yeah but you were brawling. But, maybe those matches that they saw were finale matches, like if I wrestled Ivan Koloff, the third match would be a Texas Death Match or some kind of a brawling match, but maybe if they saw the first ones they might see some good wrestling too. I wrestled Pedro Morales in Shea Stadium for an hour and 15-17 minutes. It was pure, clean, scientific wrestling. The point I'm making is that the majority of those people, they did and had the ability and did display good wrestling, along with some other stuff.

WF: When you were with Vince McMahon and your son, David, entered, was he upset about the way they treated him?

BS: I don't know how unhappy he was, but I can tell you I was extremely unhappy because the last thing I wanted in the world I wanted to do was put on the tights. But, what happened was that McMahon was trying to get me to put on the tights back on, he said that it would be great for David and he let David think that you know you and father, this would be a great boost for you. David believed it, I really didn't, but I went along with it, but I despise it because number two things, at this stage in my life, the last thing I want is to put on tights and number two, I just didn't feel that at my age and the injuries that I had had, that I wasn't going to try and go out there and try to be Bruno of yesteryear. That to me is if I couldn't be at least the best I could be, it would be embarrassing to me number one when I knew I wouldn't be up to par performance wise and number two it was embarrassing to me because when I saw the changes in wrestling, I didn't want to be part of what was now so called wrestling. But I did it because the promises that David believed was going to do for him, which I really didn't buy. But then David became disillusioned when he would see that after he an I wrestled as a team, that once I take the tights off, David would go right back and be used as a preliminary boy. So he became frustrated and angry and he started behaving a little, how should I say it, he wasn't using his best judgement, out of anger and frustration he would quit. Well, by him quitting, I knew that there would be really no places to go, I knew that because David can be a bit of a hard-head and might want to come back. So I got caught in one heck of a situation, I knew that in order for me to get him back, I had to things that I never did in my life, and that is give into things that I didn't believe in, for example, McMahon would ask me to put on the tights again, me and Orndorff as a team against Orton and Piper. He knew that I wouldn't refuse it because he too figured that David may want to come back and I'd have to ask him to take him back. So I was caught in this kind of a situation, it was very frustrating for me and very miserable and finally I told my kid, I said, look, if you're going to stay with this guy, stay, if you're going to leave, leave for good because I'm not going to allow myself to be used by this guy as he's doing right now because he knows that every time you quit, he can make demands on me because that's the only way you can be brought back. Finally, I just couldn't take it anymore, I so despised everything about it and when I saw my opportunity to leave because of a contract that I had and what have you, when the thing was came to a conclusion, then I just left. I left in February of 1988.

WF: What was your role in WWF when you left, were you commentating?

BS: You might say I was, and I was not (commentating). When I came back in September 11, 1984, I started back, I started back as a color commentator, but when I saw as things went on and then he went from two commentators to three. By this time I saw what they wanted, they didn't want it to be serious, stuff that just wasn't for me and then I was just biding my time, waiting for my contract and I just wasn't really participating, some people would criticize me, calling me the silent partner. But that was my choice because I just didn't feel comfortable in playing the part that they wanted. I just shut up, I just wouldn't say anything the only thing I would do is the replay. If he (Vince, Jr.) would try to get me into a little confrontation with Jesse Ventura, basically I wouldn't bite, I would just make a remark or so and stay out of it.

WF: After you left, how did you feel when they would make a mockery of your ring career and the term, The Living Legend?

BS: Well, you have to understand the mentality here with McMahon. They started calling the Living Legend way back in the late 60s, it got to where it was so established, that people just started calling me the Living Legend. I'm still wrestling 12-13 years later, and people were still, so it was so established that when McMahon wanted to discredit me, even after '81, there was some heat between me and them. They brought in Salvitore Bellomo. They hurt the poor guy. Here's an innocent guy, through no fault to his, he was being booed by the fans, why, because of the stupidity of McMahon, because they were mad at me because of a couple things that had happened, they started praising Bellomo as perhaps the greatest Italian wrestler of all time. Now, he wasn't saying it, Bellomo wasn't saying anything, the poor guy goes in the ring and he's doing the best he can, and he was a pretty talented fellow, but they were saying it broadcasting, McMahon says many experts say that this is the greatest wrestler of all time, that their way of trying to discredit me, like this guy was better than I was. But, the fans took offense to that. Then McMahon so terribly wanted to get Sammartino forgotten, that every step he took, it would backfire. Billy Graham, the living legend, and when they mention living legend, people identify that name with me. To this day, he wants to do something to take away from that, look at now Hulk Hogan, they're actually calling him the immortal, Hulk Hogan, and that's flying like a lead balloon. McMahon, that's where people think he's smart, in some area maybe he is, but in some other areas he's an idiot. Because instead of going on and do what's best for whom ever, whether it be Bellomo or Billy Graham or somebody else, he's trying to discredit me, in reality he hurt other people. Look at Madison Square Garden, they have a certain section of people who have contributed to MSG, and when it comes to wrestling, they have Hulk there, but I'm not there. I don't think it's MSG, I think it's McMahon who used whatever, influence, or whatever to the Garden. I don't even want to be there, because if the Garden is that pathetic to be influenced by a Vince McMahon as to who they feel should be recognized, than who even wants to be there. Is he having such success in the Garden, that they have to meet to his every demand because they couldn't survive without him and his wrestling (there not even drawing anything there). In my day, we did draw and I appeared there over 200 times. Nobody, as an individual, I'm not talking about basketball or hockey, because these fellows probably play there for who knows how many hundreds of times, but as a single performer, I wrestled there 211 times. You tell me anybody whose ever come anywhere near that. This guy (Hogan) gets credit that he doesn't deserve. First of all, I'd like to see McMahon have the guts to put Hogan, 1 year, on every MSG show, for twelve straight shows. People would get tired of him after the second show. He's never come in two shows in a row to where the second time the house didn't drop. It changed because the wrestler of today, like Hulk Hogan, he's not a wrestler. In my career, if I wrestled Hens Mortier, we use to have 1 hour, it would be 1 hour of wrestling, because that was his style, that's what he was best at. But, if I wrestled a guy like Buddy Rogers or Baron Scicluna, the type of scoop slams, armdrags, it's called the high spots. If that was there specialty, I would do that. If I wrestled a strong guy, we would do a lot of strong stuff. If I wrestled Tanaka (Toru) we would do a combination of some wrestling, some karate and stuff like that. If you weren't able to do that, then you would be a routine guy, to where every month you were basically the same, like a guy like Hogan is. That doesn't hold, that doesn't last. That's why even McMahon, and he admitted that he could not put Hogan in the same arena back to back, he can do it once, but like he can't keep going with it. Here's a guy (Hogan) whose been with McMahon since 1984, which is 8 years, and I bet you if you counted all the times he's been in MSG, by himself, I bet you it hasn't been 25 times. (Hogan only wrestles weekends) But, I use to wrestle 7 days a week when I was champion. My first reign, from 1963 -1971, I use to wrestle 7 days one week and then 6 days one week. The seventh day, when I didn't wrestle, was a promise I made Frank Tunney, cause I use to go to Toronto, because he had been good to me back in 1961. So, I promised him, that I would still go when he needed every couple of weeks. I did that crazy schedule for 8 years. I was pretty much shot after 8 years, I ached from head to toe because I wasn't the type of a guy who would take any pain killers, any medication, I've always boasted and I still will, I haven't taken 10 aspirins in my lifetime, so I wrestled hurt a lot of times and I wrestled in a lot of pain, and after those 8 years I had had it, I had to get out, and I did and allowed the body to recuperate and then I actually enjoyed the business much more after I lost the belt, because I was wrestling at my own pace. Then, I was really having fun, I was really enjoying the business again, until McMahon (Sr.) called me up because things had really slacked off in New York, they were doing pretty bad and he asked me if I'd come back full-time for a while and then that's when Morales lost the belt to Stasiak and I came back and 1 year went to 2, 2 went to 3, 3 went to 4....

WF: What kind of role model do you think Hulk Hogan is?

BS: I think Hogan is a poor excuse of a human being. He's a greedy guy, look at, he's very greedy, and I'm not going to knock that because he's in a position to make money. He's made a lot of money, and it's okay. But, their should be a line as to how far one goes. He should have disagreed, just because McMahon wanted to do something, let's assume it was all McMahon's fault that he wanted to do something, capitalizing on the war in the Middle East. Then, if he (Hogan) was any kind of a man he would have said, hey, this is serious business, there could be thousands of our boys loosing their lives there, this is not something to capitalize on. You know, be a man, and stand up. I fought the old man many, many times on different things that I didn't believe in. But this guy went along with it whole-heartedly, to pick up a big pay day. There he is with the vitamins and all the stuff, fine it's okay to make money at that too, but at least be a man and since their gearing it towards the kids, be a man and try to live the part so that you can be a role model for these kids as an honest to goodness role model. But when in fact, he's telling kids about the prayers, the vitamins, and the exercise, where he in fact, he was steroid abuser for many, many years and not only steroid abuse, but as we know now, which some of us on the inside, had always heard, known about other things involved. See, that's why I am sometimes critical of these people that write -somebody wrote something, calling Hogan bashers, they're jealous. When these idiots, and I call them idiots, make these things, they don't stop to think and say to themselves, hey maybe these guys know him a heck of a lot better than other people know him, and maybe what their saying, it's because they know it to be fact. What makes this individual call these guys bashers, and say just because the guy made a mistake on Arsenio Hall, he's making a total idiot of himself, because he's speaking of something that he knows nothing about. No, he (Hogan) went on, he lied like a dog and he's continued to lie, he's not a man, he doesn't have the guts to come clean, because he's afraid it's going to affect his dollar wise, because that's the number one thing in this guy's life, is to grab and grab and keep grabbing. And he doesn't care along the way how he does it, what negative effect it may have on anybody, it's immaterial, doesn't matter, just let me grab all that I can and keep grabbing, keep grabbing. I was at an airport, LaGuardia, and a policeman that I had bumped into him so many times at the airport, says to me, Bruno, I just had the shock of my life, some days ago, I seen this guy Hulk Hogan, always talking about the kids, little Hulkamaniacs, he said, jeese, he went through the airport and three or four kids went over to him, and he said, I actually heard him use the F word to tell them to get away from him. I said, there were no cameras around, were there? He said no. I said well then you saw the real guy. (Hogan's scandals) It's been a well kept secret, but what's happening- more and more people are coming and speaking out on it. But, what gets me is these people who write about it and want to knock the so called bashers, and they criticize those people and here they want to protect this guy who does all these evil things, who is supposed to be a role model for kids, and they want to protect that guy? This guy should be exposed, let the people know what he's all about. (Hogan leaving WWF) You'll know when he's through. He's through if the pressure really gets too much. If these stories about the steroids, cocaine, and all this stuff persist, if, now their more scandals coming towards the WWF with other charges, if all these scandalous things keep appearing, I think that he will be forced to get away because if he remains with the organization, despite all the damage that's happened up until, it will become even more severe to where it can really end their careers.

JC: Vince McMahon spent 8 years building up a big character like him and he's brainwashed the wrestling fans, do you think if things became really bad and he would be without Hogan, do you think he'll have to change his style of wrestling?

BS: No, McMahon will go under before anything else because he doesn't know how to change course, he doesn't know anything else and if he knew anything, he would have changed course three years ago, at least because the business was sinking and sinking and he didn't know what to do, any changes to try to stop that and reverse. He just kept going in the same direction that's sinking his ship quite rapidly right now. Two things keep him alive, one is the merchandising, and advertising. Now, if these scandals that are coming out and others that are out, if in any way shape or form it affects toy companies, to affect advertisers, Vince McMahon and Hogan or no Hogan, their dead, their finished. If it keeps up, other companies will have to pull out because it's going to put them in a spot, because toys are for kids, and if these scandalous stories come out about them, if toy companies stand with them and keep going with them, it's going to reflect on them as well.

JC: What happened between you and the UWF?

BS: Well, when I was first approached by Herb Abrams, I didn't have no idea who Herb Abrams was. My wife and I just came back from Italy and I had all these messages and I returned the call and he told me he was originally from New York and he was a big, big fan of mine, he use to come to MSG, he said to me, when you wrestled, I loved that kind of wrestling. He said, I don't what's going on (today), I'm in a position to start a new league and I would love to have someone like you as a commentator and even perhaps as an advisor. This was music to my ears. But, he told me that when he was going to get started, we have to be a little patient, because to get his foot in the door with television stations, advertisers, what have you, they want to know names and since they (tv) didn't understand the game, that he was going to have to get names that are established today and then in time we would start bringing in a new crop of young people, good athletes, who can wrestle. I said yeah, I can understand that and I'll go along with that. In the beginning, I went along with these guys, because I had understood what he had said. But, unfortunately, whether to his fault or not his fault, as time went on, I didn't see any of the changes that I was looking to see, if anything I saw a deterioration. That disappointed the heck out of me. I use to speak to Herb and he use to tell me of certain problems that he was having, television wise. So in other words, he was being held back to do what he wanted to do. But, I saw that it continued on in a way, to me, that just wasn't any good, I didn't like it. Right now the status is this, I'm not involved with anybody presently.

JC: Could you please tell us what happened between your son, David, and you involving steroids?

BS: My son took offense as I have been very critical of steroids, and drugs in general, but steroids in wrestling. My belief was that a lot of young people when they join an organization like that, if their clean, if their not already off steroids, they won't get off steroids because there will be enough hints at them that how necessary it is to be the biggest, the best. I have preached to my kids about these drugs forever. When David, against my wishes, wanted to be a wrestler, cause I did everything to discourage it, I talked and talked and talked to him about what was happening in this business and not to ever be tempted even, because this are drugs and so forth. Well, when David was wrestling with them, even though he says that nobody put pressure on him, and he's telling the truth, I doubt it if McMahon or anybody went over to him and said, David you have to get on steroids, or else. That's not the way it's done, it's done in other ways, oh if you could be a little bit bigger, if you could be a little more cut out. Well, how are you going to do all that, there's only one way, the juice, because if you don't use the juice, it takes a long time to do those things naturally. So David fell into that trap too and he denied it to me, although he says otherwise, but he did deny it to me. But, remember, he wasn't living here at home, he was living in Georgia at this time. What happened was, because I was so outspoken about the steroids, when I was asked about David, what kind of a guy am I if I am so critical of the thing, and then I denied that my own son was using it. What I said when I was asked a question in this thing by this Madden, which I don't even speak to anymore because of other things he's done that I'll never forgive him for, when he asked, I said yes, David has denied it to me, but, being a weight lifter, I know that David was taking steroids, but thank God he's off of them now, because he had a very serious scare when he was in Japan and he wanted to get even bigger and better and all this kind of stuff. He had a scare because when he came back he couldn't pass his electrocardiogram and when he went through an extensive physical, the left ventricle of his heart was inflamed. That left no permanent damage because he was lucky enough that they caught it early enough to get proper respirational information went back to normal, but it put enough fear in him that he got off of that stuff and today if you see David he looks great but he's not very big, he weighs 195-200-205 pds. But, he took great offense to this article of what I said and he wrote a very nasty letter to this Madden about me, because he was so resentful that I said that, in fact, while it hurts me to say it, but he lied when he told Madden that I knew from day one that he had gotten on steroids. I did not know from day one, because he knew how absolutely strong I am against these kinds of drugs and when I found out about it, when he had some health problems, I did everything, along with his doctors, to try to make him understand that okay, you're lucky, you got off of it in time, for God's sakes don't ever get near that. I did say in the article that after that scare that he got his act together and it scared him and so therefore he was fortunate because today he's very healthy, trains hard, in good shape. But, he took great offense to that and as a result of that he did something to hurt me by saying that even his brother is on steroids, which is a total lie, because his brother, one of the twins -Darryl, in fact Darryl was absolutely furious because he can't understand why his brother would say that, when he knows there's no truth to it. This guy (Madden) didn't print this part, but he passed the information on to Meltzer for Meltzer to print. That hurt me deeply and for that I called Madden and I really told him off, because he exaggerated or told a lie because his version was that I threatened him with his life. What I said to him was, when I found this information came to me, I was very angry, very upset that they brought Darryl's name into it, Darryl's not a wrestler. What they say about me or David is fair game. I said to him (Madden), I am so angry, if I saw you face to face, I said you would have been dead meat. I said it in anger and he of course interpreted that I made threats on his life. Now, he knows damn well what I meant. What I did was I reacted from the anger of his betrayal to me. And David and I presently, we're not speaking. But, I have three sons, and David has always been David, even with the WWF, I kept preaching, because when I saw how infested it was with drugs, I was always concerned that he being on the road with them, and I wasn't- I just use to go to the tv, that he might be influenced more and more. But, he fell into that trap and it bothered me a whole lot. But, David didn't always listen to me, even in wrestling advise, if I gave some advice, but somebody else would give advice, that sounded more what he wanted to hear, that's the advice he would take.

JC: What are you doing now that you're retired?

BS: I get up in the morning, some people would say I'm nuts, but I enjoy it, about 7:30 and I do my 5,6 mile jog. Lately, I've been jogging in pain, because I have tendonitis of my left foot and the doctor keeps telling me it's going to go away, but I'm running in pain. Then, I do my 3,000 leg raises, leg extensions, situps, I do a total of 3,000 reps. Then, I take my shower and I have a little breakfast and I go visit my mom, who's 94 years old, we spend a little bit of time together. Then, I come home and my wife and I, we have some chores to do. In the evening, after supper, I read the paper, then I go down to my gym, I have a gym downstairs and I go take about an 1 1/2 hour workout, then I do a phone program, too. At night I watch a couple hours of tv, watch the 11 o'clock news, Ted Koppel, or whatever. It might be boring, but to me I'm extremely happy with it.

JC: You spent your life in wrestling. It was your career. Are you sad to look back and see what it has become?

BS: What bothers me is this. When I came into professional wrestling, I never fought the promoters for more money, I was never a money hungry guy, and never held anybody up. Not that I didn't want to make a good living because I had family and responsibilities. But, I left the game and I wanted to be the best I could possibly be for the game and I tried to conduct myself in a way not to bring any scandals to the business, you know. I always tried to have a match, when it was over, that the people got their money's worth. Also, when I left the business, I left it in maybe a little better shape than the way I found it, so that other young people who would come into it, could continue on and have a future. But, then what took place, instead, it saddened me to the point, to where it has become such a joke, that I'm almost embarrassed to be associated with it.

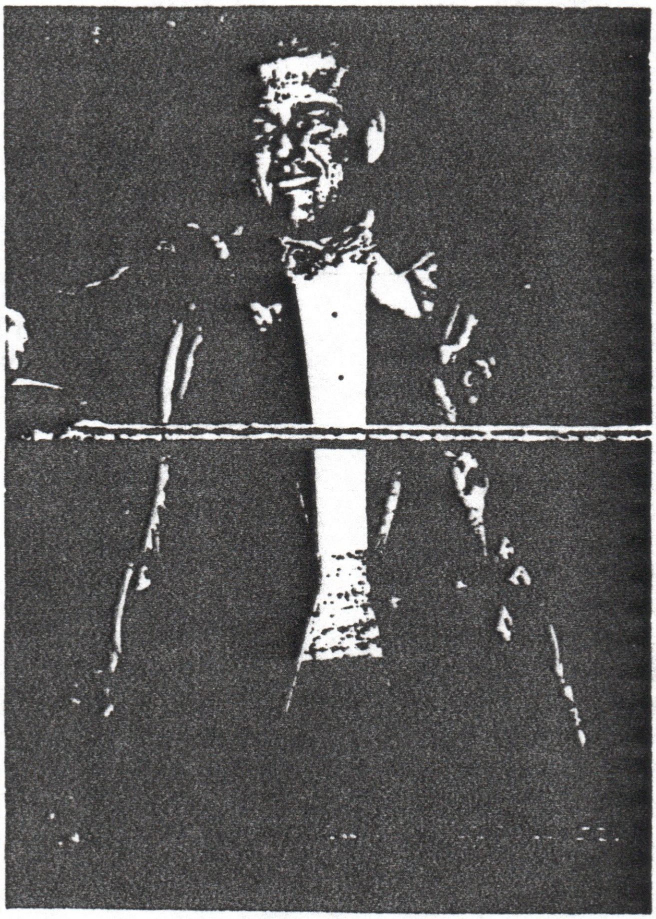
JC: Thank you very much for your time and thought that you put into this interview for the Wrestling Flyer.

BS: I'm glad that there are people out there, who are sincere, honest, straight and that's why I'm so happy to do this for you.

INTERVIEW
TERRY TAYLOR

JC: Did you ever wrestle as an amateur?

TT: I've never had an amateur wrestling match. I never thought I was going to be a pro-wrestler when I was growing up. When I was younger, I played football and swam. I was a better swimmer than I was a football player.



JC: I heard that you were well educated, did you get a college education?

TT: Yeah, I have a degree in economics from Guilford College in Greensboro, NC.

JC: How did you first get interested in wrestling?

TT: I liked it as a kid. I lived in Vero Beach, FL, and they ran Eddie Graham, Mike Graham, Jack Brisco, they were all wrestling in West Palm Beach every Monday night, which was seventy miles from my home. I got caught up in the soap opera part of it as a kid. I loved it. Every one o'clock on Monday, WPBT, we used to watch it. If it didn't come on, my brother and I were heartbroken. As soon as we'd watch it on TV, we would go to the beach and beat the poop out of each other, wrestling and slamming each other in the water. It was great, I loved it.

JC: Did there become a point where you really wanted to get involved as a pro-wrestler?

TT: No, I think I'm like most people, I never thought it was approachable. I had a friend named Steve Travis, who wrestled as Steve Travis- he was in a bad car wreck so he's no longer wrestling. He played defensive tackle in Guilford and I played offensive guard. I was 185 pds and he was 310. I blocked him a couple times, just to tangle his legs up, and the first thing he ever said to me was, 'If you ever hit me that low again, I'll put cleat marks up and down your back.' That was the beginning of a beautiful friendship. He had a chance to get started with ICW up in Greensboro, NC. They had Ernie Ladd, Johnny Powers, Mil Mascaras, they had a real good run. Steve was a bodyguard for Johnny Powers because I guess Johnny was not paying the guys what he should. Johnny said for doing this, 'I'll let you be a wrestler,' and Steve asked me to show him what I know and the only thing I knew is what I watched on TV, good enough to get it started. So to make a long story short, two years later after we both graduated, he was wrestling in West Palm. I went to watch, we were pretty good friends, he said, 'Come back to Tampa with me and party.' So we went back to Tampa together and Tuesday night I saw the matches and the electricity and it was great. I said this is pretty cool. And then the next day at TV, Chic Donovan didn't show up, so I borrowed a pair of boots and a pair of tights and I had a TV match. Eddie Graham liked me so he taught me a little bit. I was making more wrestling one weekend than I was making with my job all week. It didn't take a college degree to figure out what I should be doing. I was making $250 for doing the TV and that was twelve years ago. I started on September 28 in 1979 and I wrestled five or six times on TV and I wrestled Ernie Ladd and he beat me in like fifteen seconds. It was in Tampa and it showed in my hometown and getting beat in three or four minutes, people understood, but then after a while, they started saying, 'Get out of wrestling, you're the shits.' So I knew I needed to get some seasoning, so I went to Knoxville and I was up there for six months and I had a great run. And Jim Barnett, who was running the Atlanta TV in the early 80s, late 70s, they were weeding the talent out when they were closing Knoxville. I was one of the guys they kept. I wrestled for Jerry Jarrett from the end of '81 to the end of '83. I had a real good two year run there. The Rock 'N' Roll Express was real hot there, the Midnight Express was real hot, I had a pretty good run, Lawler was hot (that's when they were doing the thing with Andy Kaufman), Jimmy Hart was there, there was just great talent. I was making $1,200-$1,500 a week back then and then selling pictures making $400, $500, $600 a week over and above. So I was making great money back then and it spoiled me. Then Dundee quit booking Memphis, there was a big split, Lawler and Jarrett had a big argument, and sides were picked as to who was going to stay and who was going to go. And I sided with Jerry Jarrett and Lawler won out, so we got treated really badly, the ones that sided with Jarrett. You know in this business, they can make you feel as good or as bad as they want to, and it was just a real down time. Dundee went to Louisiana to book for Bill Watts because Bill's territory was really on it's ass and he needed to give it a shot in the arm. So Dundee said, 'Give me a couple weeks and call,' so I called him and he took the whole crew that popped Memphis- the Midnight Express, the Rock 'N' Roll Express, I was part of it because it was a great package. Jim Duggan was already there, Junkyard Dog was on fire, Nikolai Volkoff, they had a bunch of real good talent, they just needed somebody to give it some direction and spice it up, and that's what Dundee did. I had a tremendous three year run with Bill and I was proud to say that I was part of that company.

JC: How did you get involved with the booking with Watts?

TT: I booked it for ten weeks, I didn't understand what was going on. I left, I gave my notice when Dundee left, and the Rock 'N' Roll left, and a bunch of the other guys went to work for Dusty in the NWA You know, the money started to fall off and Bill was starting to get frustrated. So I gave my notice too, because I figured the whole crew would go to the NWA and the same thing would happen. I left and six months later, Bill called me up and asked me to be the general manager, as Dick Slater was booking it. I said I don't know how to do that. He said, 'I think I can teach you how to run my company, I want to start doing other things.' If Bill Watts is anything, he's a salesman. So he talked me into it and I drove back and I had to move my family back to Louisiana. I did ten TVs for him, he didn't tell anybody what I was supposed to be doing there, but Dick Slater still thought he was booking, it was a real bad time for me. It was a lot of stress, I mean I enjoyed the part of the creativity doing the TVs. The whole reason I was there is that Bill was trying to get Ken Mantell and Ken held out or couldn't come at that time or something. So ten weeks after, Bill just told me, 'Look, I'm going to let Ken do this and you be a wrestler again.' I thought my world had ended, but it wasn't my fault. Back then I was younger and I thought, my God, I didn't do well. But we drew some tremendous houses and had great ratings. I don't know if I could have kept it up, you know, doing a few good things is easy, it's keeping it good is what's so hard.

JC: Was it a good experience for you booking, because you found out the way the promoters see things?

TT: Yeah, I had to fire people, that's the first time I ever had to do that and it wasn't easy. I had to fire Al Perez, who I thought was a great talent and I thought he was a great worker. He had either had his run or something and I was told to fire him and I did. And Al and I are good friends now, but there was a period there where he and I were contemporaries or peers, and I had to fire him. And afterwards, it's a tribute to the kind of guy he is, that he didn't hold a grudge. It wasn't me firing him, it was just the guy in my position.

JC: What were some of the problems that led up to the UWF being bought out?

TT: Well Bill was running out of money. He was just getting ready to turn the corner, but he had undertaken something that was a little bigger scale than he thought. Before it, I think he was going to start cutting into his, like re-mortgaging his house and doing things that were going to mess up his retirement, so he sold out. And I think Dusty used all of us to try to make the NWA guys look better and I think people saw that and farted at it.

JC: After you lost that TV title unification match with Nikita Koloff, Dusty didn't seem to know how to use you...

TT: Yeah, Dusty's never used me well, I'd be lying if I said he did. I've asked him a lot of times if there was heat, and he's always said, 'No.' But it's very hard to get a straight answer in this business. If he says no, but the way I've been used, I'm not saying I'm the most talented guy in the world, but a booker's job is to use guys to the best of their ability and the best to his ability to get the maximum number of dollars and people in the seats. I don't think that was done with me anytime I've ever worked with Dusty, and I don't think he would argue with that.

JC: Yeah, I guess for the past two years being under Dusty, you were switched around from role to role and it appeared as though he didn't know what to do with you.

TT: The past two years have been very bad for me. It's been hard on my family, it's made me very unhappy as far as the wrestling goes. That's why it's kind of nice to be out of there, it's like a mixed blessing. I'm not getting the regular checks now, but I don't know. I guess I was kind of disappointed because I really wanted to be a part of Bill turning that place around because I was part of it when it happened in Louisiana in '86 and '84. I really wanted to be a part of that, getting it going, hell maybe I will, it's not over with yet.

JC: Do you see Bill turning WCW around even though the market is so bad today?

TT: Absolutely, sure he can. I think if anybody can do it, he can. He is very good at getting the best out of his talent and he has no problem moving talent in and out. To me, it's the perfect time to be booking this territory because it couldn't be any worse than it is or was as far as ratings and everything else. Anything you do has got to be better. There's a lot of wrestlers out there that could help this company and they could just say, 'Look, were only going to give you six months, a hell of a run, and that's it.' There's a lot of guys out there that are working Japan or that are unemployed that would help this company as far as new faces and keeping things fresh and new. That's what is wrong with New York. I mean I love Tito Santana like a brother, but he's been there ten years. He was there nine years before they gave him a character. It's still the same guy, it's the same gift no matter what the wrapping is.

JC: What happened or where did you go after the thing with the NWA and Dusty didn't work out?

TT: I was living in Texas because Jim Crockett and Dusty were telling us all, 'Move to Dallas, we're going to have our company based here and we're going to overtake New York (WWF).' I didn't care if we overtook New York or not, I just did what they said, so I moved to Dallas. And they didn't fire me, but they just made it unbearable for me to stay, so I quit, and this was before you signed two year deals where they don't have to pay you, but you can't go anywhere. So I went to Dallas and I had just bought a house and quit, it's one of those things where you quit on principle. I've learned since then that there is no principles in wrestling. I've tried to have morals and integrity and stuff like that and try to present myself. But it's like my wife told me, 'Well, you quit a bunch of companies, you quit New York because they were trying to beat you on TV too much, so you come here and you don't say anything, you just let them beat you on TV, now you don't have a job. You quit up there, you got fired here, how do you make it?' Well anyway, I worked for the Von Erichs for a while. Boy that was interesting, we never drew any money, but I had a great time.

JC: I guess after a while with the Von Erichs, you went to Titan. Was it the money that made you go to the WWF?

TT: Yeah, finances. I bought a house in Dallas and didn't have a job. My wife was working two jobs trying to float us, but then she got sick at her night job a couple nights in a row, and finally we got one of those little tests, and she was pregnant. I was only making $75 a night with the Von Erichs deal and we weren't even working steady. But then I got a few independents that were paying good, they helped. I just called Pat Patterson once a week for nine months, it took me nine months to get a job there. When I went up there, they didn't know what they were going to do with me. The first two nights I wrestled as a good guy against Mike Sharpe because Hercules hurt his arm so Mike took his spot. Then I wrestled two nights as a bad guy against Tito Santana. I guess they liked my work, they just didn't know what to do with me. McMahon pulled me over and he just said, 'Terry Taylor doesn't mean anything up here. You're six feet, 230 pds. We have Hulks, we have Macho Men, we Ultimate Warriors, we've got all this stuff and just Terry Taylor is not going to get it. Let me think and I'll come up with a character for you.' I mean he was very fair, a lot of people say that Red Rooster was stupid and goofy. Steve Sax, who plays with the Chicago White Sox, loved it. He didn't know it was me. I went to a banquet with him a year ago and he said, 'Yeah I loved this one guy, he'd come out and walk around and do this.' And I said that was me. And he goes, 'No way, no way.' I mean a lot of people still remember that character more than Terry Taylor. I spent nine years trying to make Terry Taylor a credible wrestler and then in one TV they turned me into a bird and people remembered it. That was another lesson I had to learn. That thing about having integrity and standing up to the business, well I found out that the business doesn't really stand up back.

JC: So when you originally went to Titan, you thought that they would use you as Terry Taylor and you weren't aware of any gimmick they were going to put on you?

TT: No, Ted DiBiase went to bat for me. They wouldn't hire me until Teddy finally said, 'Yeah this guy's good.' On his word they let me in.

JC: I remember a specific WWF Prime Time Wrestling show where you had said, 'I'm not Terry Taylor, I'm the Red Rooster,' as you were breaking away from Heenan. I know it was part of the angle between you and Steve Lombardi, but was it hard for you to actually say that, kind of like giving up all of the things you worked for as Terry Taylor?

TT: Well I'll be honest with you John. The WWF to me was like making it in the NFL. They had big stars, they had quarter of a million dollar houses every night, they were doing tremendous business, they had Andre the Giant, they had all these guys, and I'm not a mark for wrestling, but I figured these guys knew what they were doing. I went from the Von Erichs to this place, I mean my first week, I worked four days and made over $5,000. I mean that's a lot better than $75 a night. So when they said, 'We want you to be this rooster character,' in my heart inside I said, oh my God, what am I doing? But I hadn't had a job in a year and I made great money doing it and I got recognition. Now that I'm not the Red Rooster anymore, I look back on it and they were smarter than me, my ego got in the way. People always made fun of it, saying, 'Well Terry Taylor's a great wrestler.' I still could have been a great wrestler if they decided to make me one.

JC: Did you change your actual wrestling style at all or did Vince ever tell you to concentrate more on the gimmick than the wrestling?

TT: No, I was never told that. I still had some good matches. I had some great ones with Curt Hennig, Rick Martel, I had some good ones with KoKo B. Ware. Those guys wanted to wrestle, but some guys up there wanted to work hard and some didn't.

JC: After a while there, it just seemed as though the Red Rooster became kind of like a jobber, I hate to say that, but it was like the Rooster put everybody over.

TT: Well that's what it was. After a year and a half there, I quit. It's one of those principle things. They were beating me on TV more than they were putting me over. They were leaving me off TV or beating me. In fact, Pat Patterson in San Francisco said, 'We're going to have you wrestle Teddy, and we're going to have something close, but we need him over.' I said fine. And they said, 'How about his finish, he sticks a $100 bill in your mouth.' I said screw you, I quit. But then I thought about it, you know Pat's a great guy, no matter what anybody says about him. Pat really is a good person and he was genuinely concerned that I wanted to quit and he tried to smooth it over. And I just said, well Teddy got me in here, and as a favor to him, not the company, I'll do it. Then after I quit, they tried to get me to come back and reconsider. They were very fair and they were very good to me. But I just didn't want to become, I don't want to knock KoKo, but KoKo B. Ware had that great gimmick and then they just beat him and beat him and beat him, and I didn't want to do that. I honestly thought that I would be the next Ric Flair, I mean maybe that's me living on fantasy island, but I honestly thought I had what it took. I admire Ric, but it just seems like whenever Dusty came in, boom.

JC: Why do you think that happened, do you think he held a grudge against you?

TT: Either he thinks I have no talent or there's something personal and either way, the result is the same. We don't really speak, I'm not buddy, buddy with him. You can see who his friends are, I mean it's like a baseball coach I guess, you know, the favorites get to play, plus the favorites here got great money deals for two and three years. I don't begrudge Dusty, I'm very unhappy with what he did, but he did what he thought was best. And it was not in Terry Taylor's best interest to get beat by Van Hammer in 69 seconds. Where is he now? Now, he's been working for a whole year just to get ready for it. He just wasn't ready and it's not his fault, they just put him in with me to do something he wasn't ready to do. They could have been using guys like that to get me over and I could have helped them draw money because I can talk and work. I think, maybe I'm wrong, I've spent twelve years of my life getting good at this, then all of a sudden, all I did was get beat. The last year and a half has been very frustrating to me.

JC: How exactly did you leave Titan and show up in WCW?

TT: When I was unhappy about what was going on up in Titan, I started calling around. Jim Ross said, 'If you get out of your contract up there, you can come here.' Jim Ross was in charge of the booking committee. Jim Ross told me to quit Titan and I could come in making the same thing I was making in Titan. And after I did give my notice to Titan, Jim Ross was relieved of that duty and they brought Ole Anderson in. And Ole hired me at half price. But I had already given my notice, so it's like jumping off a cliff, you can't jump back up.

JC: When you first came back to WCW, you were a face and then you became a heel. Was there any reason for that?

TT: Yeah, I felt like I had to be because all these guys like Sting, Steiners, Lex, Simmons, I mean all these guys on contracts were babyfaces, I had to be.

JC: Then you broke away from the York Foundation...

TT: That was all my idea. The breakup of the York Foundation, all that was mine.

JC: After being involved with several different gimmicks, how do you feel about them relating to the business?

TT: John if they develop a character, no matter how stupid, how smart, how silly, or whatever, if it's properly promoted and they let you do some stuff and give you some wind, it'll get over. But if you make a guy into a rooster and then beat him all the time, he's just a silly freaking job guy with a red Mohawk.

JC: What was happening recently when your contract came up?

TT: Well what's so strange is, I mean I don't begrudge Bill because I know he's a businessman and he's gotta do what he's gotta do. I called him once a month for the two years after the UWF folded. For the last two years I've called him about once a month or once every six to eight weeks just to see how he's doing, touch base with him. And he was doing that Omnitrition and he wanted me to sell it and I didn't want to, which you know is no big deal. I appreciate him, he taught me stuff about business and he was always kind of a teacher, one of those hard teachers, not the kind that would ever let you slide. Every time you did something he really let you know about it. I mean he was very hard-nosed and very opinionated.

JC: But he had belief in you, wanting to teach you...

TT: Yeah, if he thought you did something wrong, he'll let you know. So a while ago, my wife said, 'Bill's the new boss,' and I said, well, this is going to be good, at least maybe now I would get a chance to do something. I really thought that he would run with the guys that got him to the damn, go back to the old UWF thing. And when he came in, he barely spoke to me and he acted like we weren't really, you know, I guess, friends. And I said, oh no, something's wrong. Politics is part of it just like everything else. I just said, Bill, I'd like to get a meeting with you when you get a chance, I know you have to straighten all this other stuff out. My contact was up on August 9, so they had to tell me something by July 9. I got something July 8, saying they wanted to discuss my future. Well, nobody would meet with me, I mean nobody would meet with me, so finally, June 23 I had to call the office at 5:30 at night and Magnum finally told me that they didn't renew me. I mean none of them would tell me, I know it's not easy firing guys, but to them it's another decision, to me it was my life. Finally a week later, I talked to Bill and I just asked him, Bill, you never gave me a chance to do anything. I said, you fired me before you ever saw what I could do and if anybody else knew what I could do, it's you. He said, 'The way you've been used on television, you've got to get out of here for a year. To be re-packaged and used would not mean a damn thing. Get out of here for a while and we'll see what happens.' I didn't agree with him, but what am I going to say.

JC: It was printed in a recent edition of The Wrestling Observer Newsletter that you were offered to work $300 a night on an unspecified schedule. Is that true?

TT: That's not true, he never offered me anything, he just let me go. There was never a dollar figure, nothing, he just said, 'You've got to get out of here for a while.'

JC: The word around the sheets was that he had plans to bring you back in a year or so with a Mr. Wrestling 3 type gimmick, is there any truth to that?

TT: No, but maybe they just got it before I had heard anything about it.

JC: I know loyalty is a big thing in this business, so were you hurt by the way Bill treated you, after how you kept in touch with him and because of how close you were?

TT: Yeah kind of. I just honestly felt like if Bill was going to turn us around, he was going to go with the guys that turned his first company around. That would be Ricky Morton, Robert Gibson, me as a babyface, and a bunch of other guys. I just honestly felt like I never really got a chance, but it's got to be the jobs I did on TV. I did 47 jobs in two years on TV. I mean I can work and I can still do stuff. I told Dusty, I said, Dusty, you're making my job harder. He goes, 'What do you mean, baby.' I said, you beat me so much that the people know I'm going to lose, so I can't get any heat because they know sooner or later they are going to be happy. He said, 'I beat Arn Anderson every night for five years and he still got heat.' Well that's Arn. Arn also was a world tag team champion four times, I mean he got his runs.

JC: Yeah and now it appears as though Eaton & Anderson are going to be let go when their contracts come up.

TT: I certainly hope not, those guys are great talents. But see John, there's nowhere to go anymore. Puerto Rice called me and I'm, I'm scared. Junkyard Dog told me last night that Jerry Jarrett wants to talk to me. If nobody hires me in the next year and I don't get a Japan deal, I'm not going to spend the rest of my life trying to get that past glory. I've had a great run and I've saved my money, so if I have to get a job, I'll do that. I mean twelve years of being a professional wrestler and being in the limelight was great, but if it's time for me to step down, I'll do it. I just honestly in my heart feel like I have more to give to the business, especially when I see the shape the business is in. I'm not saying I'm the greatest talent in the world, but I look around and I see guys with less making more and doing more.

JC: Then do you think the business is unhealthy right now?

TT: It's not a good time to try to be a wrestler right now, unless you're locked in somewhere. I've been very fortunate that now that I'm no longer with WCW that some other people are interested. I'd be scared to death to think, that if I was doing this and then nobody called, it would be really frightening.

JC: When you think about it, do you honestly think that it would have been better to have stayed Terry Taylor the whole way, and not doing the rooster and computer man? I personally feel that being a rooster and doing that other gimmick hurt your reputation and all the work you put into making the name Terry Taylor mean something.

TT: Well you know what's kind of funny. That may be true, but I made more money doing those than I ever made in my life. And this year that I've been beaten so much, and my career has been flushed down the commode, this has been my best year also. So I mean, while I sacrificed my integrity, I still made a good living and provided for my family, so what's the bottom line.

JC: Yeah, it's just when I look at it, gimmicks don't last. Like those gimmicks you had, the rooster and the computer man, they didn't last very long, but Terry Taylor stayed strong for a much longer time.

TT: Yeah, well maybe it would have, it's just, I can't look back and say, well, I screwed up, I should have stayed this and that. Like when McMahon is paying my check and wants me to be the Red Rooster, I had a choice, I'd either say yes I'm going to do it or no I'm not. I mean let's face it, McMahon's been a lot more successful doing that than I've been doing anything. Yeah, I don't, I don't know. It's very easy to look back and say, well, I should have done this and I did that, that's 20/20 hindsight. What I would really like to do is get two or three more good years wrestling, then I won't have to ever work again.

JC: Are you totally glad you got into the wrestling business or would you have wanted to do something else?

TT: I loved it, I wouldn't trade it for anything. I feel like I'm one of the most fortunate guys in the world, to be able to do something that's as cool as wrestling. I've been in it twelve years and I had a great time and a great run. I would just like to have some more. Jimmy Cornette and I are going to work something out, I think. I'm going to go down there as a ba... I've already cut my hair and bleached it back out so Steven Seagal is gone. I considered it the kiss of death cause ever since I did it my career has gone down, down, down.

JC: Well I don't think WCW ever realized how much potential you have as a heel.

TT: Sure they didn't, it's just a personality thing. You're only as good as they're going to let you be.

JC: How do you compare Ric Flair to Hulk Hogan?

TT: Well they're two different situations, but for a guy who's the same size as Flair, he's the best to me that there's ever been. But if you talk about guys that excite people, that have exposed wrestling to more people than anybody else, a guy who's put more asses in more seats than anybody over the last decade, you've got to say Hulk. I mean he was good at what he did, people believed in him, they loved him, he was great. Flair was a heel so he made the people hate him and he sold a lot of tickets to people waiting to see him get his ass kicked, and he did it better than anybody.

JC: If you look back ten years ago, the NWA was selling out buildings and packing the houses. But the past couple years have been horrible. You've gone to the Civic Center in Philly over the last year and the crowds were dropping so low that they were down in the 600s. What is your opinion about why somewhere along the way, the houses and TV just kept going down and down, now at all-time lows?

TT: My opinion is that they have the same guys on top that they had five years ago when it went under. There's a few different faces, but I mean, there's a lot of the guys here that were figured in and wrestling.... To me, I'm not knocking anybody because I'd like to come back to WCW or maybe the WWF, I don't know, but when you think about, it's the same group of guys wrestling the same guys, it's just different combinations, all the time.

JC: I'm wondering where wrestling will be able to develop it's major stars of the future because there's really no place for either WWF or WCW to breed or train them. After Hulk and Flair leave, where will the next stars come from?

TT: That's true. They're trying to make Van Hammer a superstar and the people have already seen through them. That doesn't mean that he won't get good, it's just that he was exposed too early. How do you pay a guy to learn, how can they afford to pay guys to learn for six or eight months to where they are credible enough to get in the ring, when they're not drawing anything back? I mean that investment needs to be made, but how does one justify that?

JC: What are some of the areas that you've wanted to work for, but really haven't gotten a chance to?

TT: I would like to get in Japan just because I like the way they work. They work hard, they work snug. I worked for Baba two years ago and I didn't want to burn that bridge because the NWA sent me over for that NWA tournament (where Masa Chono won the belt). Those guys seem to want me to come back. Bigelow's taking some time off, Vader's taking time off, so I'm hoping to slide in now. Over there, they wrestle my style. They do some incredible stuff that I can't do, but I can do some stuff that accentuates what they can do, if that makes sense? My whole career I've just been good at making other people look good and in Japan, that's a real plus because it's just a different style and over there I'm a big guy. The guys weigh more, but I'm usually three or four inches taller.

JC: You've been good putting other guys over, but as you said, over there they just want a guy who works hard.

TT: If you work hard over there, that's all Japanese people want, is for you to work hard. Whether you're cleaning a hotel room or driving a taxi. The little old ladies that clean the rooms have got hunch backs because they're bent over scrubbing the floors everyday, they run from the room to the cart and back. These are 60 year old ladies, they're just glad to work. They don't expect to get paid just for showing up, which to me is what's wrong with our society. Nobody has any integrity hardly anymore.

JC: Do think that is one of the problems with the business today, some of these guys who have no respect for the business and just want a payday?

TT: I like what we do, I still love the business. I think somebody that gets in the business and makes a $100,000 their first year doesn't appreciate it, cause they've never bled, they've never driven 300 miles each way to wrestle in front of a hundred people, they never wrestled with injuries. The business now has gotten to where if you're injured, you just don't go to work. I've wrestled when I couldn't get out of my car, that was for Watts against Jake. I physically couldn't get out of my car. I drove to the place, the security guys got me out of the car, I had torn some muscles in my groin, I couldn't get my left leg out of my car. In WCW, I've missed four matches in two years. The reason I missed those days was because I had a knee operation. And I would have made those, not to wrestle, but they told me I didn't have to. I came back six days after that scope knee surgery to get beat by Rick Rude in a heel against heel. It's just stuff like that that just makes my job kind of hard. And I was booked on an average of 23 days a month. No matter what, if my name was on the card, I made it.

JC: Dedication. It's just too bad that they're isn't more of a reward for the genuine guys in the business. Look at the way you've been treated after all you've gone through. And you're one of the more talented workers.

TT: Thanks. I mean I just figured if I did what I was told, didn't miss any days, had a good attitude, stayed in shape, never complained, that I would have a job forever. And I've just learned a lesson suddenly that that's not the case. I paid my dues, still paying them, it looks like. But I like what I do. With the economy like it is, nobody's just ready to snap me up as a color commentator or sports shows, stuff that I really want to do. I've got a few irons in the fire, I may go back to school. I'm thinking about going to chiropractic school because I do all the adjustments on the guys in the locker room now, haven't crippled anybody yet.

JC: At this point in time, what do you see in the future for Terry Taylor?

TT: What I think I'm going to do is, I went over and wrestled in the NWA tournament, and after my first match over there, they asked me to come back in October. So I think I may have a future over in Japan. I mean I saved my money, so I'm cool. I can't retire, but it's not like I have to kill myself to get a job. It's pretty cool now because, when WCW let me go, I was like, well what am I going to do? I've been doing well because a lot of independent promoters have called and they seem to be interested in Terry Taylor. It's not steady like it was, but I think it's going to great. Jim Cornette and I have been on the phone back and forth. They're going to be running in November a lot. When I go to Japan in October, I'll have done a TV for them and I think I'm supposed to go work for Dallas, Global Wrestling. I mean there's a lot of people out there that have been calling. My thing in Japan is first and foremost, I'd like to get 12 to 15 weeks a year over there guaranteed, then I wouldn't have to work over here.

EDITOR: This interview was conducted in late August. Since this interview, Terry received a call from J.J. Dillon, assistant to Vince McMahon of the WWF. They flew him up to the TV tapings on 9/20 and 9/21 in Winnepeg, MB, and Brandan, MB, respectively. They had a meeting and have decided to hire Terry. He will be a heel under the name, Terrific Terry Taylor. In that first night of TV, Taylor beat Jim Brunzell in one match and Jim Powers in another. The WWF is interested in using him for his abilities and talent, not as a cartoon character. The Wrestling Flyer Newsletter wishes him the best in what could be his final run in wrestling.

HAWK

Just when the LOD looked to be going back to the top of the tag team scene in the WWF, one of it's members has decided to take some time off. Hawk is officially gone from the WWF. Six man tag team matches were scheduled around the circuit for the next month or so with The Beverly Brothers & The Genius vs The Legion of Doom & Paul Ellering. Several sources say that those particular matches will just become handicapped tag team matches. But where does that leave the legendary Road Warriors, Legion of Doom tag team. Or where does Paul Ellering and especially Animal, stand now that Hawk has made this decision. To find out everything that has happened and what the future looks like, we decided to get in touch with the person that would know the most about it, Hawk. The following is a very brief interview with Hawk that was conducted by John Clark via telephone on 9/8.

JC: I've been hearing several different stories about your recent departure from the WWF and I was wondering just what the truth to the whole situation is.

HAWK: If you want the right story, don't take it from Vince McMahon, I'll tell you that. I wasn't fired, I quit, on the 31st, two days after SummerSlam. Yeah, I phoned in on mid-afternoon. I called in from England, talked to a secretary and told him that, due to physical wear and mental duress, too much time on the road, basically. I ain't going to do it. I've got no problems to say anything bad about the WWF, all I can say is that I've decided that I'm going to put my career on hold for a while. The reason I got out was because I'm tired of working my butt off. I did this for ten years, 250 matches a year, 350 flights, a different town everyday, those times just make you feel like you've got to slow down, so I'm slowing down.

JC: I was wondering if you quitting had anything to do with the Penthouse article and the WWF leaking out information.

HAWK: Well I wouldn't say that that helped the situation any. Things that are supposed to be confidential should be confidential.

JC: What is Animal's current status with the WWF now that you're gone.

HAWK: Well that would be something that you would have to ask him, I wouldn't know. I mean I've talked to him, but he hasn't said anything about leaving.

JC: Are you going to be working anywhere else when you come back, if you do?

HAWK: I have nothing planned in the immediate future. I wouldn't say necessarily, that the two of us are through together. It was never a personal thing with my partner. It was a business thing that I just had had enough work. I wanted to basically, get a hold, get back on to some normal pattern of life. When you wrestle 250 times a year, take 350 and some flights, it gets a little nauseating after ten years. I'm just a regular guy, with an odd job. I'm just keeping a low profile, we'll see what happens. I wouldn't say it's the end of The Road Warriors.

JC: I guess you originally got started in '83. How did you first ever get into the business?

HAWK: To tell you the truth, I never even watched it. I watched maybe two matches and then I just met Eddie Sharkey (the man who trained Hawk & Animal) and he took us together and that's how it all evolved. I just happened to meet him and heard that he had trained other guys and so I thought that I would give it a shot because I thought it was something I could do. Ole Anderson was the one that put us together, but me and my partner had known each other for a long time.

JC: And you guys were the ones who kind of pioneered the whole idea of face-paint in wrestling.

HAWK: No we didn't know what we were doing. We knew that in this business, you've got to get noticed. So what we did was just try to get ourselves noticed. We figured, let's do something that everybody's not. But now, everybody's doing it.

JC: Why exactly did you leave the NWA?

HAWK: Because we didn't like the way we were being treated. Here they were willing to pay us great money, but the money wasn't worth the garbage you stood up for, so we walked out on a lot of them.

JC: I remember a certain comment that Animal made. He said that the only reason somebody goes to the WWF is to start your career or just before you're ready to retire. Is that the...

HAWK: Well, I wouldn't say that our careers together are ended forever. As long as there's money out there to make and people that want to see it, I imagine either we'll go our own ways or we'll stay together, or whatever happens, it's really totally up in the air. No, I don't see myself totally retiring.

JC: Are you thinking about Japan at all?

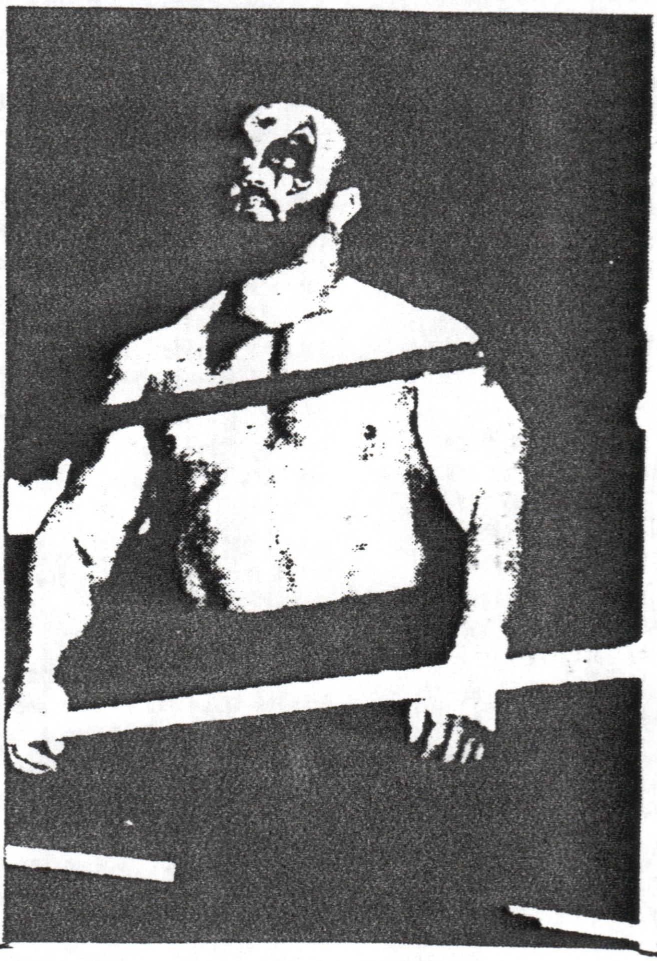
HAWK: I'm thinking of a lot of things. I'm thinking, who knows, you might see me on American Gladiators.

JC: Have you been upset at all recently with the Legion of Doom character becoming softer with the Rocco gimmick?

HAWK: Well that wasn't a deciding factor, but given some time, the Rocco might have worked. But I don't think that it made me, personally, any softer.

INTERVIEW
ANIMAL

Back in late August, one of the most successful tag teams in professional wrestling history dissolved, at least for the time being, as Hawk left the WWF and his partner of ten years, Animal, and their longtime manager and friend, Paul Ellering. Animal decided to stay with the company, until now, as he phoned the offices of Titan Sports on Wednesday October 21 to notify them that he was quitting. The following is an interview with Animal that was conducted by the editor, John Clark, via telephone from Animal's home near Minneapolis, Minnesota, on the very day that he quit, Wednesday October 21.



JC: What were some of your reasons for quitting?

ANIMAL: Basically, the reason was due to medical reasons. I retired myself from the WWF. I probably wouldn't have done it this soon, but without my partner, there's no other reason for me to stay there anyway. And these are injuries that have been agonizing, that should have been taken care of and they weren't. With the schedule of the WWF, there's no way you can heel. For instance, last month I broke my tailbone in Japan working against The Beverly Brothers and I've been on the road everyday since and there's just no time for it to heel up.

JC: Going back to when Hawk quit, when he stayed over in England and called the office two days later to tell them he was quitting. What kind of communication was there between you and Hawk about him leaving?

ANIMAL: There was no communication. Paul and I showed up at TV (tapings in Hershey, PA, on 9/1, two days after SummerSlam) and we didn't find out until about six o'clock that evening, and we were at TV since twelve o'clock that afternoon. We found out that possibly he wasn't going to come, but we didn't know for sure, so we stayed again the second day at TV, then we found out he wasn't going to come, for sure.

JC: Have you heard from him at all since then?

ANIMAL: No, not since that happened, not in the last month and a half. But he definitely has his own problems. All I know is that Paul and I didn't find out until about five days after SummerSlam.

JC: How do you feel about that?

ANIMAL: I'm perturbed about it. Myself, I thought that with the nine years, almost ten years being together, setting the standards that we did for wrestling, that we owed more to each other than to just let it happen like that.

JC: And being together that long, it had to be more than a business relationship.

ANIMAL: It actually couldn't. Even like my kids, I come home from the airport and my kids are hugging and kissing him, hey Uncle Hawk, how you doing? So by doing that, it not only hurt me, he hurt my family, and everything, and this is one thing he didn't take into consideration, I guess.

JC: What do you see as the future for the Road Warriors?

ANIMAL: No other team will ever accomplish what we have or stay together for as long as we have, not even The Steiner Brothers. Our future after the United States was done was Japan. I guess he's going over to Japan by himself. I guess he's tagging up with a Japanese guy, which in my opinion, our main objective to wrestle in Japan was to wrestle Japanese. Why in the world would you tag with a Japanese guy in Japan? But that's his decision.

JC: I'm just shocked that he never called you about any of this.

ANIMAL: Well brother, there just comes a time, whenever you think you have mutual respect with a person, I guess it really wasn't there as much as you thought it was, and then you find out at the harshest time that it wasn't. I've stuck with him through thick and thin for nine years, no matter what kind of personal problems or whatever problems he got suspended for or whatever, I stuck by him and I was there. There were plenty of times that I was approached to go singular, but I never did. I valued the tag team and the unstoppable force we had together.

JC: Where does this situation leave Paul Ellering now?

ANIMAL: Paul was in the same boat I was. See, Paul Ellering is financially set. He really is a mastermind, you know, wall street, the whole works, that's the truth. And Paul really doesn't need this business. He is probably one of the main reasons why we got to where we were. Without his tutelage in the beginning there, we would have never made it. Paul was an actual manager, he wasn't a fly by night guy who came to TV one day and they said, 'You're a manager,' we hired him as a manager. Paul Ellering was probably the only real manager in wrestling over the last twenty years. I know for sure with us, he was our only real manager.

JC: Was there any problems between the three of you before this thing happened with Hawk (Mike Hegstrand)?

ANIMAL: When you're together that long with somebody, sure you're going to have your disagreements. Ten years is like being married, you're going to have arguments, but you always come to a happy medium because you're both working for the same goal, achieve to be the best, right. But this last decision of his totally flabbergasted me. After it happened, they were going to team me up with Crush. Working out with Crush went over good in Europe because I was already booked over in Europe. Just cause Mike quit at SummerSlam, didn't mean I was going to fill my contract with Japan and fill my contract with Europe. I went over to Japan by myself and wrestled The Beverly Brothers by myself and I wrestled Paul Diamond by myself. I got standing ovations by the Japanese people, and that was with a lesser office, working for Tenryu, working for WAR. But my popularity has not changed because you have to look at my last three defeats over in Japan. We won the tag team tournament for that office, we beat Earthquake & Typhoon, and we beat Hulk Hogan & Tenryu over there. So we've proven ourselves to be worthy opponents for anybody, anywhere and anytime we could go out in any foreign country and sell out a house, no matter where it is. They accepted me with open arms.

JC: It must be great working over there, for the money and because the people over there respect the sport and they want to see is guys working hard.

ANIMAL: Exactly, it's what you give them. With the Japanese people, it's all about respect. They know and they're trained and that's why it's going to be fun to see how the reaction is with Hawk and his Japanese partner because we're accustomed to getting the good reviews when he and I got together. And I know damn well that no matter who he tags up with, it's not going to get the same reviews as when he was with me.

JC: Business over there seems to still be going good, but what do you think is the problem right now in the U.S.?

ANIMAL: The United States has been prostituted in the fact that you've got twenty different organizations on TV, trying to accomplish the same thing. I'll be honest, WCW has nothing that anybody wants to watch. The WWF, they've got people that want to watch, but being misused in the wrong way. Thank God through thick and thin, no matter how much any promoter, whether it was Jim Herd, Vince McMahon, Verne Gagne, no matter who it was that would ever try to keep us down as The Road Warriors, it never worked. They could not keep it down because no matter who we worked against, whether it was the so-called heel or babyface, the people wanted to see us kick their ass. It sounds kind of stupid, but we are modern day Supermen, it was like you took Superman out of the comic book strip and you put him in spikes, shoulderpads, and paint.

JC: And over the years you never had to change your gimmick or anything and you weren't like a Hulk Hogan, where people are asked to like him, where he has to verbally talk them into his certain charisma.

ANIMAL: We didn't have to go out there and ask anybody to cheer, 'LOD, LOD,' they knew when the tag team went out there, that something was going to happen. They were taught that way from day one and they were educated that way, that is the bottom line.

JC: Going back to when Hawk quit, what were the plans for you, did Vince know what was going on?

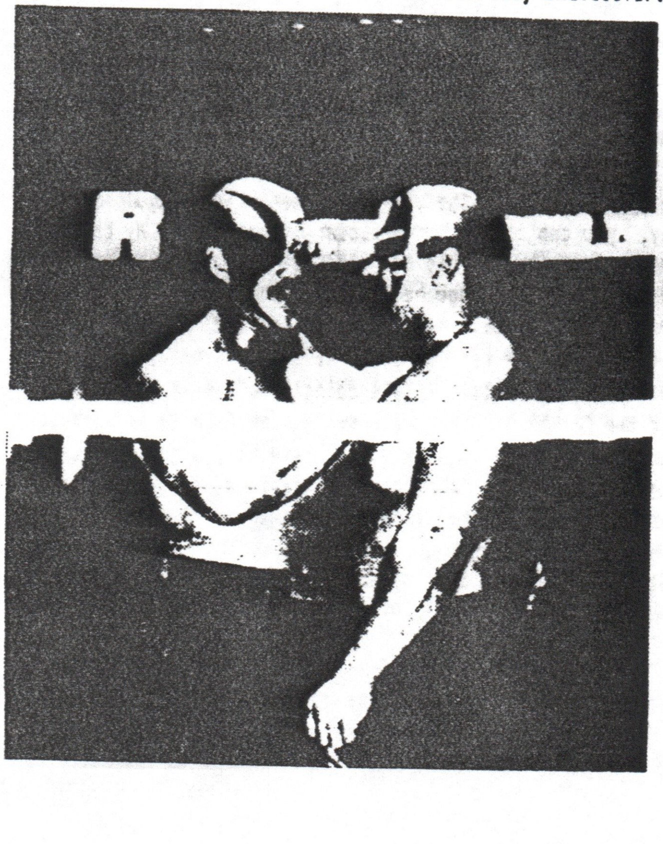
ANIMAL: Vince didn't have any idea what was going on. He didn't get the message until the second day that Hawk had quit.

JC: It seems as though throughout the summer that LOD was kind of being toned down, working with the Beverlies, but were there plans to do big things with it again?

ANIMAL: You look at the talent they have, who was the right talent? But things were going to change. When a guy does something like that, he not only effects one family, which is mine, he doesn't only effect two families, which is Paul's, he ended up effecting about four or five families. Things just should have been a little more thought out before they were acted, that's all.

JC: Do you think that if Hawk was still there you would've still quit today?

ANIMAL: No, I wouldn't have quit if I was together with Hawk. But if I would've, I would have talked to him about it first. I would have given him that much courtesy. And after nine years, there's no common courtesy whatsoever.



Hey, I agree brother, there ain't nobody more tired of this shit after ten years than I am. I mean I got three kids, let's face it, I've got something that I have to rush home for everyday, he's a single man, so I guess I'm kind of mislead of where the pressures are.

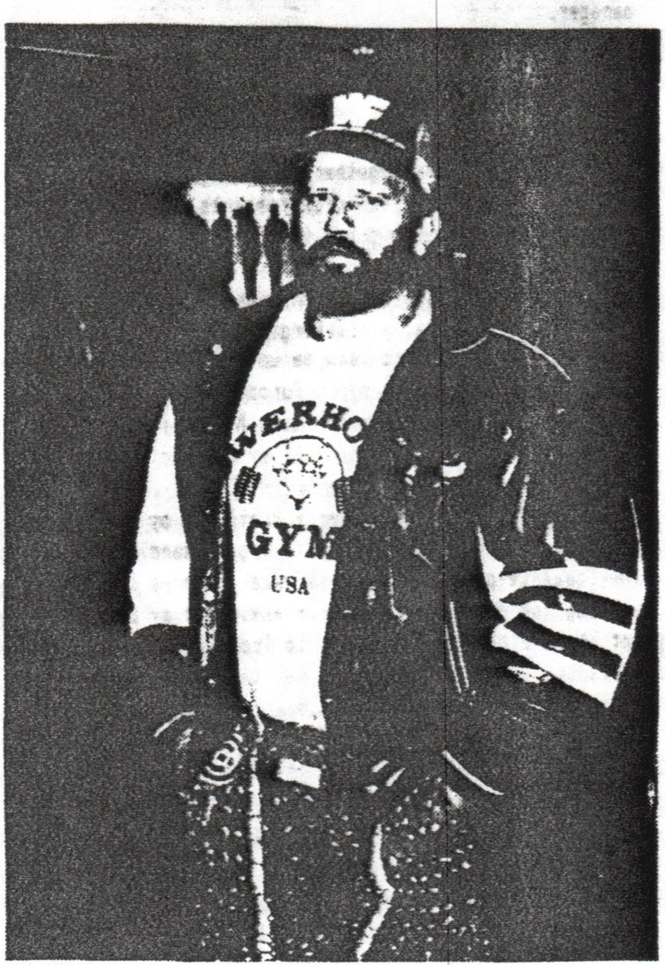
JC: When you went over for the Europe tour after SummerSlam, they teamed you with Crush. Were there plans to keep you guys together and build you up as a team?

ANIMAL: They put Crush and I together and they accepted Crush and I together, no problem. But still, in hindsight, it's not The LOD and it's not The Road Warriors and it bothered me. If Crush and I would have stayed together, it would have been two separate identities tagging up. It would have been like the old days of Bonny King and Chief Jay Strongbow tagging, two separate identities tagging up, that's the only thing it would have been. Crush and I would have agreed on it if it could have been done the right way, but it just works out better this way, that way it doesn't hurt me, it doesn't hurt Crush, I can take a couple years off here, collect whatever I need to collect and I could always come back in two years. Davey Boy did it, he was in a car accident, he came back two years later, and look what he's doing now. The Road Warrior myth, The Legion of Doom myth will never die, in this business, it will never die. Who knows, two years from now, Hawk and I may be getting back together. All they have to do is reunite The Road Warriors and it will be one of the biggest things that hit the business. But for right now, he made his decision, abrupt as it may be, to go his own way, and I guess I've got to respect that. But I have my views where I don't have to like it, and nobody's going to make me like it, but I wouldn't do that to anybody, but everybody's different, I mean life goes on.

JC: What was going on in the last couple of weeks with you. Did you want to find a new partner, did you want to bring your brother in with you?

ANIMAL: After all the years together with Hawk, I figured, hey, you can't get any closer than blood. My brother, Terminator, he's a big bad kid, you're talking about a kid here. Eight years ago he benchpressed 420 (pounds) getting out of high school. He's a powerhouse and he's a very good wrestler, every bit as good as anybody else is, he just hasn't had the breaks. He's doing fine down in the Bahamas and the Caribbean and he would have been a great partner. It just never got through that far, none of these plans ever got through to their final stages, I put a halt on them before they ever got going.

JC: What have you been doing for the last two weeks before you quit?



ANIMAL: I wrestled Papa Shango all of last week and oh yeah, Double Trouble was a treat. The one is about 500 pds and the slam was kind of awkward, so I went to the belly to back and got him pretty easily. He's shaped like a pear so slamming him is like trying to scrape your knuckles along ground, trying not to drop him. But as for my future, there were no plans at all. The WWF is a good organization. With this sport, this business, what you put into it is what you are going to get out of it. The travel may be rough here and there, but if you can handle it and stick it out, you are going to make some money, and that's what we're all in it for, financial security for our families and everything.

JC: After Hawk got done his suspension, you guys returned at WrestleMania with Paul. Whose actual decision was it for bringing him back?

ANIMAL: See, we've always kept in contact with Paul through the years, anyway. And we had thought, we want impact, and were going to bring an impact, bring Paul back. And as you can tell from the reaction we got, Paul is no stranger to wrestling, we got a standing ovation. Paul jumped about coming back.

JC: Along with Paul, came the Rocco puppet. Did you like the idea, I mean, do you think it took away from that Superman image you guys had?

ANIMAL: No, overall, no. People knew we were still going to kick ass. Rocco, on a shoot side, it wasn't of the exact thing, but it was something that actually, my grandfather had given me when I was a little kid. It was more of a monumental thing than anything else. And that's legit and the whole story that was written about it was on the up and up. It wasn't lost in the city where our neighborhood got demolished, but it was lost in a fire, more less. You know, you've got to change things here and there to make it work for TV, but it was a legit thing and it was all pretty much Paul's idea. It was working okay, marketing wise it would have worked through the roof. I can live with it or I can live without it, I didn't really care about the doll.

JC: That being a cartoon gimmick, did Vince love that?

ANIMAL: Brother, from day to day, you can not tell what Vince will like and not like, so I can't even comment on it. But you've got to respect the guy, he's a genius for what he's accomplished in this business. He's the king and he will be for a long time, nobody's going to come close.

INTERVIEW
MARTY JANNETTY

BY JOHN CLARK

JC: How did you originally get started in pro wrestling or first become interested in it?

MJ: Well I wrestled in high school and college, went to the University of Auburn a couple years. Back at the time, they had to drop a guys' sport or add a girls' sport, so they dropped wrestling. So I went to the University of Georgia, just in time for them to drop theirs. I played a little football too, but wrestling was my main thing. After that fell apart, I tried to get a job and make a little money for the summer and found out that that wasn't what I wanted to do. So it was going to be wrestling and I went to Jerry Oates, a guy from my hometown of Columbus, Georgia, and asked him to please show me the ropes, get me the hell out of truck driving. He did that and I started out in Kansas City for Bob Giegel, that was All-Star Wrestling.

JC: What were you earning when you started out and how were the working conditions back then?

MJ: That was back in '85, I think I started out like around $600 to $700 a week. That was good for me cause I was used to making $200 a week working 40-50 hours a week. The crowds were still decent back then in the Central States area and good fan support, so I was enjoying myself and learning and stepping on up as I was going.

JC: When did you actually have your first professional match?

MJ: The very first match I had was somewhere outside of Atlanta, Georgia, late in '84. I think it was, I'm not sure, I'm getting old, I can't remember the year. Then I worked in the Central States area for Bob Giegel, the promoter, and Bulldog Bob Brown was the booker.

JC: How did you first get hooked up with Shawn Michaels?

MJ: I was already in the Central States area and doing well and he came through, he was just breaking in. Bob Giegel tagged us up once, he needed a tag match on the card so he threw us together and things just went real well. There was a click there, the chemistry was right. We could see it, the fans could see it, promoters could see it, but at the time, we both had other commitments going on, so we couldn't stay together. So Shawn took off and went back to Texas and I went to the AWA with Verne Gagne. They wanted a tag team and they asked me who I'd like for a partner and I said, Shawn Michaels cause we did very well. So they brought him in and we were called The Midnight Rockers and things just took off from there.

JC: How was it working for Verne Gagne now that you look back on it?

MJ: It was okay, it was an ideal situation because you didn't work a whole lot. You only worked maybe 13-14 days a month. The pay could have been better, but it was still good. But I was hearing what the guys were making in the WWF and the NWA, and I wanted the big bucks of course, as everybody always does. It was still an increase from Kansas City, but it still wasn't the top pay. But I was young and I didn't know any better, always wanting the top pay and I probably wasn't worth it at the time.

JC: From being there in the AWA for a while, what would be your opinion about why the AWA failed?

MJ: Well I think Verne Gagne lied and cheated and took advantage of the boys too much. He screwed a lot of people over, he stepped on a lot of toes, he did a lot of lying, and that caused a lot of the guys to miss his cards and not show up for some of the shows. And the fans didn't take that too well. You know, if they came to see the Freebirds against the Road Warriors and neither one showed up, well they didn't come back anymore. While I was there, they were drawing $89,000 houses. But when the Road Warriors left, it cut it in half, it went down to about $40,000. And when the Freebirds left, it went down to about $20,000 and people started dwindling out from there and it just kept dropping. The problem was money. Verne was an egomaniac for one and he was just overly greedy. The way I understood it, he used to be a good payoff man, but he started getting some competition from the WWF. He started getting worried and started holding on to a little more of the money, instead of paying the guys. He really made some bad payoffs and ripped a few of the guys off, obviously, I know from my own personal experiences, I've heard some unbelievable lies. But I had no choice at the time, neither did Shawn. At the time, we had to take it and swallow it and keep going. But these other guys who are known drawing cards could go other places, they didn't have to take the crap, and that's why they left.

JC: I guess you left the AWA in 1987 because the WWF wanted you to come and work for them.

MJ: Yeah, I think he (Vince McMahon) saw a marketing value in us. I imagine he saw our abilities as wrestlers and when we started drawing crowds for Verne, he saw that their was a potential of making money there. Our first night there, Vince threw his first meeting for all the boys. It was about the boys needing to do right in clubs (nightclubs) and present yourself professionally in and out of the ring. Well, that very night we went out to a bar and you know, we were trying to meet all the guys, hang out, and be part of the gang. And we were partying and we may have got too loud and a couple glasses broke here and there, and some things happened. He said he thought that we needed to do a little growing up first, so he gave us a little time off, which ended up being a year before we came back. Our first time was in '87 and then he brought us back in '88. I think that if we hadn't gone out that night and partied a little too hard, we would have started in '87. Of course, by the time the word got back to him about what happened at the club, it was stretched way out of proportion. To him, he got the story we caught the couch on fire at the local hotel and had to throw the couch in the swimming pool to let it out. He heard a completely different story than what was going on and he thought we were a couple monsters. I mean Vince has been out with the fellas, he's cut loose a couple of times. I reminded him one time that he let us go for the very thing he was doing.

JC: From hearing that, I'm surprised the Nasty Boys haven't been kicked out yet.

MJ: I tell you what, they've done a lot worse than we ever did. But there my buddies so I'm happy for them.

JC: So how did you start up again with the WWF in '88?

MJ: Well, we called back because AWA wanted us for a 2 year contract, where if we had signed it, we would have been bound to them for 2 years. So we called up to let them know that if they had any interest in us, they needed to let us know or something, because we were fixed to sign a contract that would tie us down for 2 years. And they called back in a couple days and gave us another shot and everything worked out great for a while.

JC: How did you feel about your position in the company and the way you were being treated in the beginning?

MJ: Well he's got so many guys there, he's got 70 guys that he's got to deal with everyday. And he can't devote all his time to one particular team or any one guy because if he's negotiating with us one day, he's got 70 other guys in line knocking at his door wanting to know something. He's in a tough position so I can't hold anything against him. I do think he's done a great job, I mean he's been put to the test many times. A lot of times people say, 'Because this happened, the WWF's going to fall apart,' but he always manages to keep his shoulders up and keep it going and I think he'll keep it going for a long time, as long as he wants to keep it going.

JC: But do you think the WWF is a good long term thing for the wrestling business?

MJ: I think so because he's got his act together, he knows what he's doing. When it gets burned out here, he's got the foreign markets ready to go and he can take it over there for a while and let it cool down here and then come right back and start it up again. He knows what he's doing.

JC: But the houses and TV ratings are at all-time lows now. The crowds at Madison Square Garden are now so bad that Vince is scared of losing it, so that's why he's going to have the next WrestleMania there. You never know, you just might be there.

MJ: I certainly hope so, I could use a couple bucks. Except the one that I have here at the house running around shitting on the floor. Buck's my dog's name!

JC: Your matches with Tully Blanchard and Arn Anderson back in '89 were probably the best tag team series that the WWF has had in the past 3-4 years. But I don't think that the WWF put any heat behind the matches or tried to keep the series going. Do you feel that way about your matches with Tully and Arn?

MJ: I would say they're probably the best team we've ever wrestled and we had some really good matches and I enjoyed it, but there were several times they could have really built something up. I don't know what the reason was, but there were several times Shawn and I both thought that with a little help from the people that control the TV, we could have really had some good stuff going on. With the Rougeaus one time, with the Brain Busters, and we had some really good matches with the Powers of Pain.

JC: I remember some of those matches with Barbarian and Warlord where you were flying 20 feet in the air from those backdrops. But do you like working with those big guys any more or less than working with the guys your size?

MJ: It doesn't really matter to me, I like to mix it up. But then again, when your wrestling the bigger guys, you're going to get a few extra lumps and bruises, but I'm used to that. I grew up that way. I didn't grow up in the best part of the city. My family went through times where we didn't have a whole lot of money, it wasn't real easy getting meals. It was tough growing up and I try to put that behind me because there were some bad memories. But you never really can forget, when you're going hungry, freezing winters, you never forget. I don't know if it affects me anymore, except for the fact that I can not look at another person and think that they could ever kick my ass because I've come through hell to get here and I ain't going to be put back. I've been from the bottom and I haven't been to the top of the mountain yet, but I've been up the mountain farther than I ever dreamed when I was kid, that I would ever get out of where I was and once I got out of there, I never wanted to go back. I may get knocked down, but I will get up and keep coming. One thing my father taught me is what you finish you get credit for, not what you started.

JC: You had a good teacher there. Why do you feel did Vince end the Rockers?

MJ: I think it was a couple of things. When Curt Hennig was gone and a couple of other guys, the heels were gone. So they needed a top heel and they saw it in Shawn Michaels, which is a natural for him. I also think Shawn, himself, wanted to go on as singles. We had talked about it before and that was his ultimate goal, was to later on, become a singles.

JC: Were there also some legit heat between you and Shawn? I've heard of several incidents where you guys came to blows, I believe one of the times was in a hotel in Denver.

MJ: There were several things. When you're around somebody 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, it's hard to do. We did it well for 5 years, but there is just no way you can't have differences and sometimes one of us is feeling bad or both are feeling bad and something comes up, where the only way you want to settle it is to swing at each other and we did that several times.

JC: What would happen after your fights with him.

MJ: Well, I'll tell you what, I like Shawn, although I don't like him anything like I used to, but he can't fight, he's a good wrestler, but he can't fight.

JC: Do you feel like Shawn took advantage of some things and basically just forgot about you?

MJ: A lot of people came to me and said, 'Hey, Shawn stabbed you in the back,' because our partnership was a business. We talked about things together, we agreed on things together, every business move was made together. Now when this thing came up to split up, I was kind of left out in the dark. One time we were doing a commercial for a cereal, I don't know if it ever came out or not, Superstars Cereal, where there were several other teams involved in the commercial and they were getting twice the pay we were. We called and made a complaint about it and they (WWF) said they didn't know anything. Shawn said to me, 'F___ this, let's quit.' I said, if you mean it, I'll stick with you, were a team, if you want to quit, we'll quit. So he said, 'Yeah, call them and tell them.' So I did and I got a call back from Vince or Pat Patterson and they said, 'Hey look, you're welcome to stay and wrestle singles if you want.' Well I said, no, I'm doing the same thing as Shawn.' And they said, 'Well Shawn's not leaving, he's already told us that was your decision.' So there was a little plot there, I believe.

JC: I don't know how close you were with him, but after starting at the bottom with him and then, together, moving up in the business, were you hurt by this because it was kind of like he put business over your friendship.

MJ: Emotionally, it was very disappointing because when Shawn Michaels came into wrestling, he didn't know how to talk business, every business deal made was by me. He couldn't open his mouth in front of a promoter, everything had to be done by me. Not just wrestling, just things in life in general, you know I had to show him everything. It was like leading a baby around by the hand and then when he got to the right position, he just kind of left me, he forgot how he got where he is. Shawn is probably, I can't think of anybody who's a bigger egomaniac, but while we were friends, I overlooked it. But now that he's kind of screwed me over a few times, I don't care, he's a big egomaniac, you know some people just don't learn. You can kick their ass and they'll shut up for two weeks, but then they'll be right back to their old self.

JC: When Shawn started getting his big heel push, what were the plans for you and the expected feud between you two?

MJ: I had no idea what was going on. He had a new contract worked out, another thing I didn't know about. The contract had a deal where he wanted a title shot right away.

JC: Why exactly did you leave the WWF?

MJ: I really had no choice, there were a lot of legal matters coming up there. I've got about another 3-4 weeks maybe, and these legal matters will be solved. Once again, I don't if Shawn wasn't in on this, but there are some legal problems with my contract. Like I said, I don't want to say anything and be wrong about it, but I don't know that Shawn wasn't involved with this. In our contracts, we had a clause where we would not wrestle single matches, except for a handful for TV. We were supposed to wrestle as a tag team, solely as a tag team. All of a sudden, Shawn's contract was a little different, he could wrestle singles. And I had a couple singles matches after we split up, I wrestled Rick Martel and then I wrestled Kato. So I had a couple single matches and then, all of a sudden, they came up with my contract and said that breaches my contract. I mean I never read the fine details of that contract because it's about 12 pages long. I never had any problem with it before and then they came up to me and said, 'You broke your contract by having these single matches.' I said, well what about Shawn, he's had about 20 now. And they said, 'Well your contract's not the same as his.' So they legally got me screwed there, not a thing I could do, in fact I'm being sued in a few places. That is where it all started. They held me out, they threatened to sue me if I wrestled anywhere else, but then they called me up and said that they wanted me to make a living and wrestle somewhere else, but there's really nowhere else to wrestle and make any good money. I was under suspension without pay for six months and that's just about up.

JC: Did you get into some other type of legal trouble, where now you're not allowed to leave your house?

MJ: As I said, that was the beginning of my legal trouble. Then there was a deal down in Tampa and you can go ahead and put it on record that the Tampa Police Department is a bunch of assholes. I was out at a club, the mistake I made was being with an underage girl, but I didn't know she was underage. She was a dancer at a "doll house," therefore, I figured she was old enough. We were at another club, the Yucatan, a lot of the wrestlers go there. So I was there with the girl, hanging out, having a good time, minding our own business. She was 19 or 20, I had no idea, I didn't know you could be underage and dance at a "doll house." So she got a few drinks in her and they knew she was underage, but they knew me there so they were letting it slide. But when she started acting up, making a scene, they said, 'That's it, we've got to get her out of here,' and they had the police escort her out. She was with me, that was my date for the evening, so I went out with her, figuring they were just going to make us leave. But we got out the front door and the police officer asked her for an ID. Well she had a fake one and she didn't want to show it to him. So he reached for her pocketbook and she yanked away from him. The cop grabbed her, threw her to the concrete road, she was a little girl, about 5'2", 100 pounds. This big cop grabs, throws her, I mean belly to back slams her to the concrete and took the back of her head, grabbed a handful of hair and banged her head on the road. It was a reaction for me, I couldn't believe what I was seeing, I grabbed the cop and pulled him off. From there, there were two other cops that went nuts, they tried to beat me up and I never punched any of them, but I wouldn't let them beat me up and they got really pissed off about that. So they arrested me for resisting arrest and obstruction of justice, which is a felony. And I had to go to court for that and we plea bargained and that was a bunch of legal mess. I took a bad fall there. That Tampa Police Department is the shits. When you got a guy who's 240 pounds and wants to beat up a girl, but he can't beat up a guy, and the judge and everybody else is taking up for it, well that's just a bunch of bullshit to me.

JC: Was there any charges against you for drug possession?

MJ: They didn't find any on me, they found some on her. But I've heard stories floating around, everything from they found a kilo of coke on me to I was dealing it in the club. They only found it on her, it was like a little package, she had maybe a gram of coke in her pocketbook. The thing I was arrested for was the.... At first they charged me with assault of an officer, but I never punched any of them, I just held them back from trying to beat me up. They're a bunch of wimps, they couldn't do it and they got pissed off about it. It was right around the time they were showing that Rodney King beating on TV everyday and I wasn't going to be another Rodney King. We got to court and it just came down to obstruction of justice and resisting arrest.

JC: Did you have any problems with a particular female judge at the trial?

MJ: When I went to court, a lot of people recognized me and in fact, there was a couple of the lawyers there coming and asking for autographs for their kids. And she didn't know wrestling, she probably didn't know anything other than *General Hospital*, and she just knew that I was getting some attention and she didn't like it, so she was really hard on me. In fact, the girl, who was underage, who caused the whole problem, she got like a year of probation, no restrictions, she could just come and go as she pleased. And me saving her ass from getting beat up by the cops, got house arrest, 2 1/2 years of probation after the house arrest, ungodly fines, and community service hours, so I really got screwed. And after that, I asked her, was there anyway I was going to get AIDS from this? And she said, 'What do you mean?' I said, well, I just got f___ed. And I think that didn't help too much. I guarantee that our legal system sucks, where's the justice? Another injustice with the law is California. Shawn and I were going to the ring in Sacramento and there was a guy who spit a beer on me. He was a pretty big fella, he took a big sip of his beer and boy, he got me right in the face, he got me good. And I couldn't see him because he blinded me with the beer, but Shawn pointed him out to the cops and they grabbed him and they took him back to the back and held him until after our match. When we came back from our match, the cops said, 'Look, we got the guy back here and you can charge him with assault. We saw it, you got one of our officers who saw it. But we'd rather you just go ahead and give him a scare.' This was new to me, I mean this guy was probably 6'4", 250, and I'm thinking, hell, how am I going to go give that big guy a scare. I didn't know what he meant. I said, what am I supposed to do, go over and yell at him, what if he gets up and beats the shit out of me? I said, well, okay, I'll do whatever I can. I walked in, they had him in one of those little rooms, they shut the door behind us and the guy was sitting there. So I said, hey, what's wrong with you, what is the deal with the beer. He says, 'F___ you,' and he went ahead and took a swing at me. I ducked and I hit him once and he fell to the ground. Well now that guy is suing me. And the cop that took me to the room, put in an incident report that Shawn and I pushed him (the officer) aside and ran in the room and put the boots to the guy, which is a complete lie because the cop took us back there. Meanwhile, the guy spit a beer on me, took a puch at me and he's suing me for a million and a half dollars. He's completely wrong, he's not going to win anything, but I am going to have to pay $20,000 for a lawyer to defend that. I'll tell you, one time I saw something in San Diego that simply amazed me and that was- Jake the Snake went to the ring and there was a bunch of drunks sitting ringside and they were yelling out to him, 'Hey, we f___ed your wife last night, she sure was good.' And Jake had had a bad day and had an argument with his wife that day as it was. These guys were screaming this out at ringside in front of thousands of people. And Jake slid right out of the ring and punched one of them, and they sued Jake. It ended up costing him a ton of money and here these guys, it was okay for them to go yelling that. But if a guy's going to go and do that, than he should take the consequences. I couldn't imagine me going up to Bruce Smith of the Buffalo Bills and saying, 'Hey you f___ing nigger, I f___ed your wife.' I'd except to get my ass beat. But the law doesn't allow that, the law protects assholes.

JC: What other lawsuits have you been involved in?

MJ: Well there was a guy down in Tampa, while wrestling he got his neck broken in the match. It was a TV taping, but they didn't put it on TV, of course. There was a guy, Shawn and I was wrestling, he'd only had a handful of matches. And he told us he'd been wrestling for months and was real experienced, which wasn't true. There's this one particular move I do. I haven't done it at all lately, because I haven't been around! But that move where I put my leg over the back of the guy's head, where I sit straight down. To me, it was a variation of Jake's DDT, that's where I came up with the move. But this guy didn't really know what he was doing and I explained to him back in the dressing room what was going on and how to do it. So I said, now this move I do, I probably won't do it with you because you're new. He said, 'No, no, I know which move it is, I love it, I want to do it.' So he got out there and did it wrong and broke his neck. What he did was, he tried to dive, all we wanted him to do was take a forward roll, which he couldn't do. And he dove, landed on the top of his head and his whole body went over the top of his head and snapped his neck. So we were involved in a lawsuit there.

JC: Did he sue you personally or you and the company?

MJ: He sued me, Shawn, and Titan Sports.

JC: I would have thought that any workers, even jobbers, would have to sign some type of waiver or something, releasing Titan Sports of all liabilities.

MJ: There's waivers they sign, whether or not he did that night, I don't know because there was a lot of confusion that night. But usually Titan Sports will not let you go into the ring without signing waivers. When a guy steps in the ring and he doesn't know what he's doing and he causes his own injury, that's what waivers are for, so they can't hold us liable. But the laws have really showed me some strange things in the past year.

JC: Going back to 1990, when you and Shawn won the tag team belts, what happened with the whole situation and what was the real reason the belts were taken away from you?

MJ: It was taped for Saturday Night's Main Event and the rope broke in the second fall and it was a fall in which they (Hart Foundation) won, but they (WWF) used that for an excuse that they couldn't sanction the match. The Harts won that fall when the rope broke, so it really shouldn't have mattered anyway. I don't know if it had anything to do with the production of the TV or if they just were afraid of what might happen if we were champions cause we were fairly popular with the crowd and we had never been champions. If we had been champions, we might have gotten over with the people much more than they wanted us to be. So to speak, we would have had an upper hand on the say-so of things, and I think maybe they didn't want to do that. We took the belts home that night and then three days later they called us and said, 'Look, President Jack Tunney doesn't want to sanction that match and it can't be legal, the rope was broke.' They quoted some rule to us that it couldn't be a legally sanctioned match and that the belts were going back to the Harts. But Shawn and I kind of looked at each other and said, 'Yeah.., bullshit!'

JC: Did they honestly tell you that, I mean most fans know that Jack Tunney is nothing but a stooge playing the role as president of WWF, which we all know isn't true.

MJ: Yeah, well we know that and you know that, but sometimes they think that the wrestlers are really like dummies off the street.

JC: I just can't believe they would honestly tell you that.
MJ: Oh yeah. They called me at my house, Shawn was over here, I live in Orlando, we were going to wrestle in Tampa that evening, so we spent the night here at my house. Vince McMahon called my house and told me and I said, wait a minute, please, tell Shawn this too! It was like a slap in the face. We asked him, tell us, was it the match was the shits, was it something we did again outside the ring, is it you don't like us representing the WWF, so what is the real reason. He goes, 'No, no, that's the reason.' So there was really nothing else we could say. If that's what he wants to tell you, then that's what he tells you and you have to go with it. He pays the checks. That's the main thing right there, as long as you're bringing home big cash, he can do what he wants with the belts. It's just extra weight to carry through the airport.

JC: I hear you're quite a practical joker. Can you tell us some of the more famous jokes that have gone down in the back or on the road?

MJ: I will say I've seen some funny things. Well if you remember Mr. Sato (Akio Sato of the Orient Express) when he was here, he was the brunt of punishment, of ribs, as we called them. We were wrestling them pretty much all the time, so that eliminated us from being able to do this stuff, so we'll say! There were several times Sato would come back from the ring and he would be getting dressed and we'd be watching him. He'd put his shirt on, whistling, having a good time, then he'd stick his pants on and there would be one of the pant legs missing, somebody had cut his pant leg in half! And he'd be saying, 'Oh you guys, you cut my leg of the pant!' (Marty does a great imitation.) There was another time, I think this was maybe the next day, he was getting dressed. The first thing he did is grab his pants and make sure both legs were there, looked at his shirt and made sure it was all together, and put everything on. He goes, 'Oh you guys, you guys not get me tonight.' Then he went to get his shoes and somebody had nailed his shoes to the floor! Another thing the guys like to do, especially with Sato, they would always tell him that this promoter was looking for him, he was in the next room. What they would do was, they would set a big bucket of water on top of the door. He'd go over there and open the door and that thing would fall on him, and he fell for that every time. He used to come back, 'Oh you guys, why do you guys do this.' There was another time, we were wrestling at a high school gym and all the guys left, he was the last one out and whoever was right before him, shut the gates and chained the locks to the gates and he was stuck in the school overnight. That's probably why he left and went back to Japan!

JC: What would be the absolute best practical joke that you can think of?

MJ: Man, there's been some good ones and Mr. Perfect was really the head of them, he was really good at them. One thing that was funny to me was at the TV taping, they had the coffee over on the table. See at the tapings, we've got interviews all day long and then the matches all night, so it's a long, tedious day. They have a buffet during the day and then they have coffee, fruit and cokes and drinks all during the evening. And somebody got to the coffee and spiked it. And they spiked it with some sleeping powder, the stuff that was outlawed by the GHP. And man, that stuff would knock you out, it doesn't matter how much you fought it, you were out. So somebody had dumped a whole bottle of it in the coffee and we didn't say anything. But we were noticing that the Bushwhackers were over in the corner and falling asleep. And Sherri Martel had a little short dress on as usual, and fell asleep in the chair, I mean she was completely unconscious. She fell over, her dress came all the way up her legs that were like wide open, and she just passed out. And some of the guys went over and shaved her eyebrows and painted a moustache on her! And there were about four or five of the guys walking around just about falling in their tracks. By the end of the day, there was about twenty guys passed out all over the place. Then Vince McMahon was walking around wondering what the hell is going on? Many times, we call him the Underweartaker, the Undertaker, Underweartaker would come back from the ring and he would find his hat and the rest of his gear tied to a rope at the top of the ceiling, chained there. He'd have to get a janitor or somebody to lower the rope so he could get his things. He was really cool about it, though. He'd come back and he'd look for his stuff and all the guys were laughing, because they knew it was hanging about twenty feet up above him on the ceiling. Well he'd look up and he just kind of stared at it for about a minute and then he'd look right dead at me and Shawn, kind of gave a little grin, and then he looked at the Nasty Boys and nodded his head, 'yeah,' then he looked at Mr. Perfect and he said, 'Okay,' that's all he said. He took it well, he's really cool.

JC: Sounds like some good times on the road. Do you miss being on the road?

MJ: Yeah, you know, when you're doing it all the time, you get tired of it, you say, I want to stay home. But I tell you what, I've been home now for six months and I can't wait to get on the road.

JC: How would compare yourself to the Marty Jannetty in the ring? Did you ever want to change anything....

MJ: I was just pretty much myself. I enjoyed it because I didn't have to put a lot of thought into it. I just had to go out and be myself cause I'm always energetic, I love wrestling, I like to have a good time. And I think that's all I really displayed in the ring, was that I was out there to do a good job and enjoy my job. I don't know if I could ever carry out a gimmick, I don't know if I have the character for it or the personality traits to carry out a gimmick. I just like doing the rock and roll type gimmick. But I'll tell you, Vince is a mastermind at that. He can just watch a person and then enhance their character with a gimmick.

JC: Has anybody ever had the guts to play a practical joke on Vince?

MJ: Well the one night he went out with this, it really wasn't practical jokes, they were just straightforward with it. He went out to a club in San Antonio, Texas, and I think he was having problems with contract negotiations with Hulk Hogan and I think he went out to hang around Hulk and try to make amends. Well they were having a pretty good time that night and I think Vince McMahon ended up taking everybody's finish that was in that place. Animal put him up on his shoulders, Hawk climbed up on a table and jumped off and they clotheslined him, took a flip in this place. Then I think Bret Hart put his shooter move on him. Vince was getting knocked around really good. Warlord saw Vince eyeing him and he saw Vince tell one of the guys, "Watch him (Warlord), I'm going to take him down." And Vince I guess maybe had a drink and he was a little louder than he realized and the Warlord overheard him and said, 'Okay, we'll see.' So Warlord just waiting patiently and he saw Vince inching up to him, little by little. Finally, Vince dove down for his leg and Warlord stuck his knee right up in Vince's face and busted his nose. So I guess Vince really got roughed up. We had TV tapings the next day and he came to the TV with a busted nose, cauliflower ear, and scrubs all over his face and he was about three hours late. That's when I reminded him that I came in late and I got fined, I guess it's just a matter of who you are. I was fined several times for being late. I've been fined a $1,000 for one show that was TV and I've been fined several hundred dollars on others. I think Davey Boy holds the record on fines. When Davey and Dynamite were both there, their checks were IOUs, they were owing Vince money, they got fined so much. Well the Bulldogs for a while, could do what they want and get away with it, but as it came to the end of the road, that's when the fines started coming out. At TV, you have to be there at about one o'clock because they have interviews for you to do, they have you do interviews for the foreign markets, you do commercials, they've got a million things.

JC: Do they tell you what to say in your interviews or do you just ad-lib them?

MJ: Usually, most of the guys come up with their own things and if they can't think of something to say, some of the other guys will help him out with it.

JC: Well, here comes the almighty question that always comes up. Have you ever taken steroids before and what is your personal opinion on the use of them in wrestling, or just sports in general?

MJ: I tried them back when I first started wrestling. That was what everybody was doing, so I figured I would give it a shot. Anytime you go to a gym, there's going to people in there wanting to sell it. When I started going to the gym in Kansas City, I ran across a bunch of the guys. They knew I wrestled and they'd say, 'Hey, we could set you up with this, set you up with that.' And I gave it a try, you know, to see what it was all about. But it was worthless to me, because it's just a temporary thing. You only gain weight when you're on it and when you're off it, you lose it right back. It's good if you're getting into a bodybuilding contest or if you need to look big for one show, like a SummerSlam or something, where you want to look huge. It's good for that, but it's not worth the side-effects it gives you. You lose your hair, you age quicker, your skin looks horrible, it's not worth all that to me. For some of the other guys that are 270, it'll put him up to 285 and that will put him up amongst all the big guys, maybe it's worth it to them. But I'm 230 and when I take steroids, I get up to 240, and that's not going to make a damn difference because I'm still 40 pds smaller. I did it for six weeks back in 1985 when I first started. Me and Dave, D.J. Peterson, who's probably my best buddy that I've met on the road, tried it out together and we both decided the same thing, you know, give it a shot. We did it for six weeks, doing what we call a cycle and we came off it and the weight went right back to where we started. We said, what the hell, it's too expensive and it's not worth it. Some guys could get away with doing a cycle for a couple hundred bucks, but some guys get the growth hormone and it costs them $1,500, $2,000 for a six week cycle. Some guys could do more than that, it could cost them $5,000 a cycle, some guys will take everything. If it's worth it to them, that's fine, that's their deal, to me, there was no sense in it. All it does is speed up what your body is doing naturally, so you're going to age quicker, I don't need that!

JC: Do you think Vince's supposed steroid testing policy is working in the WWF?

MJ: Yeah, there's no steroids in the WWF today and if there is, he probably doesn't know. In fact, he suspended a few guys because they tested positive for steroids. He's sticking with that. I think it's good. I think they should in all sports because it's no longer a matter of who's a better athlete, it's who has the best pharmacist. Better bodies have chemicals in it, that's the way it is. If you have two guys that are pretty much equal and running the hundred yard dash in 9.2 seconds, busting there ass working on it, and then one starts taking steroids, the guy that's not taking them doesn't stand a chance. So maybe he'll go out and get a better steroid and outrun the other guy that took steroids, so it becomes a matter of who's got the best doctor, and that's not really sports anymore. There are so many ways of beating the test too and it's really stupid if you get caught because it's just too easy to beat.

JC: What happened when there was the big steroid craze, when most of the guys were on them? What was happening to the guys that didn't do them?

MJ: Well it was either you did it or you fell behind. It's not just wrestling, it's not just football, it's not just track, it's everywhere. When I was going to high school back in Columbus, Georgia, there was a school where they were telling the kids to take B12 shots and they were giving them testosterone, they were giving them steroids, in high school! And they were state champions a couple years and they were ranked #1 in the nation when they were giving them steroids, and that was back in '80 or '82. It's everywhere. Since it's getting all the publicity now, maybe it's cutting or maybe it's just more quiet or secretive that it's going on. But, it is still going on.

JC: What do you see in the future for yourself?

MJ: If I have my way about it and I'm going to do all I can to have my way about it, I'm going to go back and kick Shawn's ass.

JC: So you'd rather go back to WWF than go to WCW?

MJ: Well, I wouldn't mind going either place, but right now my heart's set on evening the score with Shawn, I can't let it hang where it is right now.

JC: Now when you say that, I mean are talking, you know, Kay Fabing everything or is this legit heat?

MJ: No, I'm talking legit. I'm talking about going in and settling the score with him. I've spent too many years of my life to just walk away and let him run his mouth like he's been doing. You know after a year's time, it's going to be a dead issue, I realize that, but I'll figure a way of bringing it back to life. I've got ideas and ways to bring it back to life because I don't want it to just die and go, I want to revive it, bring it back and settle the score. Then I'll go elsewhere. Where I will go after that, I don't know. But right now, my main goal/sights are set on that. And if that doesn't ever happen, wherever you see me wrestling, you can guarantee yourself that I'm disappointed because I didn't get what I wanted done.

This is the final part of our interview with Marty Jannetty that was conducted by John Clark via telephone from Marty's home near Orlando, Florida, on September 23. Since this interview, Marty received a call from the WWF and they want him to come back to wrestle for them. Of course, he is very happy to come back and he will return with the company at the next TV tapings on 10/12 in Saskatoon, MB. It should be very interesting to see what they do with the Michaels-Jannetty matchup as it could be a feud of the year if it is handled properly.

INTERVIEW
BUDDY LANDELL

JC: How did you first break into professional wrestling and what were your initial feelings about the business?

BL: Well, I had always been a wrestling fan. I broke in around the first part of '79, was 17 years old. I was like the yuppies that have come out of the closet in the decade of the 80s. I was a wrestling fan as far as watching it on TV, it was a religion to me, watching it on TV. I liked it. My mind thinks like a wrestler, the angles that were done, etc. I was always fascinated, the same way I like soap operas, you know. I think to myself, hey, if they bring this guy and this girl back together, man, then I'll watch it the next day and the next day to find out. My mind is different, I have a creative mind. That's why I've been so successful, psychology came easy to me for this business. I could think and use my mind and I was really creative, I was an artist, I was a sculptor. A lot of people have to work so hard at wrestling, but I never really did that much because it came so easy to me. But anyway, my sister's girlfriend was the camera director here in Knoxville. They had wrestling at the high school I was going to and I went there one night and she took me backstage. She introduced me to Malenko, Orton Jr., Garvin, Savage, Roop. I started training the next day. I was trained by all those guys. And I went with All-Star Wrestling.

JC: What are the different things this business has taken you through or how has this business changed you?

BL: Well, I have been through so many stages of my life. I was 17 years old and I was driving with guys 30 and 40 and in bars and doing this and that, things that I wouldn't be really proud to say that I did. But back then it was a gas to you, you know, just being one of the boys. It showed me life because I got to go out. I was in the coal-mining towns, I saw poor people. I didn't come from a privileged background, I came from a modest background, middle class. And I always thought that these people that came up in the little towns of Kentucky, that they worked really hard for their money. And I always strived to give the people their money's worth, that is always a big thing to me. I don't know why because when I was with Turner last time, these guys like Sting, Luger, they knew they were going to make $800,000 whether there was anyone out there or there wasn't anyone out there. And it would be like, 'Let's give them 2 minutes and catch the airplane and let's get back home.' When I broke in, the harder you worked, the more the crowd came up the next week. It was a weekly situation, instead of a national deal. When I broke in, I was taught respect. For the first couple of years, I didn't even open my mouth in the dressing room. What I had to say wasn't important to these older guys, they did not want to hear me. For the first year that I worked with Randy Savage in the ICW, I didn't ride to one match in a car. I rode in the back of a ring truck. Me and the midgets, we set the ring up, wrestled, tore the ring down, and rode home. I wanted to strive to be the best that I could be at what I was doing. But the guys that break in nowadays, they have no respect for this business. It's made me see rich people, poor people, George Bush watched us wrestle in the Sam Houston Coliseum, I've met rock stars, movie stars, I've lived in mansions, I've lived in penthouses, and I've lived in outhouses. I've seen just about every aspect.

JC: What was it like for you at such a young age to be involved with this business?

BL: I was 24 years old when I worked with Ric Flair in '85. The record can be checked, we broke Elvis Presley's records in many of the coliseums that we were in. We were drawing a million dollars a week in the short time that we had our angle. We never had any physical confrontation on TV, I said, I'm the Nature Boy, he said, 'I'm the Nature Boy,' and they put us in the coliseum, we starting selling everywhere out. It was my drug problem that caused us that angle and millions of dollars.

JC: What kind of problems or trouble did you run into?

BL: I think some things stem from my childhood that I'm 31 years old and just now finding stuff out about my childhood. A lot of people use that as a cop-out and you can use it as a cop-out if you want to continue to keep on living in drugs and feeling sorry for yourself. But I'm using it now as an avenue for therapy to make me understand why that I've been so destructive. I've had the world given to me on a silver platter and I should be a multi-millionaire right now and I'm not. I did not only hurt myself, I hurt promoters, I cost Ric Flair a lot of money, J.J. Dillon, Baby Doll, Tully Blanchard, Magnum, Dusty, Crockett, you know, I was a key factor in that situation. Of course the business didn't go bankrupt because of me, or anybody else for that matter. But they were counting on me and I let them down, my family counted on me and I let them down, I've let everybody down through the years. The good thing about it is that through this whole thing, this drug nightmare, thank God that I've never lost my talent. Vince McMahon don't deny my talent, Bill Watts don't deny my talent, it's just, 'Can we trust him?' Nowadays, they would rather go with a novice and give him a chance and know that he's going to be there every night, rather than to bring somebody in that could probably be a major superstar and have this time and money put into him, and then say, well, "No-Show Budro." I believe that you have to grow up and say, hey man, I am the cause of my problems. Bobby Eaton told me something a long time ago, he says, 'Buddy, everybody don't get up every morning and think about how they're going to screw over Buddy Landell.' We have to take responsibility for our actions. I've been going to church through all this whole thing and I've been learning a lot about my spiritual life. We have a choice, right or wrong. We can choose blessings or we can choose curses. It's like, do I go into this bar or don't I go into this bar? Do I do this cocaine or do I don't do it?

__JC:__ How did you first get the name "Nature Boy?"

__BL:__ In 1983, I was just your ho-hum babyface. Tom Renesko asked me if I'd bleach my hair and come to Puerto Rico. So I bleached my hair and went to Puerto Rico. Flair and Piper were doing shots over there and Flair kept on coming over and watching me and it was the first time I had ever been a heel. I started not liking wrestling because being a babyface just wasn't my gig. But being a heel, it just came so natural. I have a gift, a way with people on a one-on-one situation in an arena and on a microphone. I was surprised how quick I got my love back for wrestling because I kind of had gotten stale.

__JC:__ When you just mentioned about how easy it was for you to be a heel, was that kind of a way to let out all of your frustrations and problems in your life? Did you find that you could use a lot of those frustrations you had in your role as a heel character, is that why it was so easy, was it a way to let out all those problems?

__BL:__ Well, yeah. I met Motley Crue here in Knoxville and I got to stay with Tommy Lee for a couple days, he's their drummer, they're real big wrestling fans. He told me the same thing about him playing drums, he gets to take his frustrations out beating and beating with the drums. Yeah, you do, you get to take your frustrations out a lot. It was one of the only ways to let out my problems. Getting back to the thing with Flair, it's something that I have to live with night and day. Flair had already given me the name "Nature Boy," and after the thing with Flair ended, Watts wanted me to go down to learn from Eddie Graham because he was Bill Watts' mentor. I was in San Antonio, TX, Ric Flair had just worked a 60 minute broadway with Kerry Von Erich, which was like pulling teeth with pliers for poor Ric. He took me out that night and he asked me if I'd like to come to Charlotte and work with him. February 4, 1985, Arn Anderson and I started the same day in Charlotte, NC. I went from having nothing to owning homes, four new cars, in a couple of months. It blew my mind and I started really thinking, hey, I really am the "Nature Boy." You do start really thinking that. Everywhere you go, people know you, you go to the bank with $4,000 checks, it's hard to really describe the feeling, but it's a feeling of you can't be touched. So I started no-showing, into the party life, doing drugs, getting paranoid, no-showing. I'd miss a $40,000 Coliseum shot, but I'd rent a limousine to drive 800 miles to make a $3,000 spot show, that's just how far gone I was at that period of time in my life. Jim Crockett told me on his private jet one night, 'I'd fire you, but I'm going to figure you out first.' I had the money to do it, it wasn't nothing to me. I thought that I was Ric Flair, man. I idolize Ric, I worship the ground he walks on. And the feeling is mutual, Ric has a lot of admiration for me, too. I'm sure he thinks that I'm an idiot for throwing the whole world away a couple times. I've told Ric to his face many times, I idolize you, man. And he told me, 'You're Elvis to me.' I thought he was working me. I said you're ribbing and he goes, 'Buddy, I think you're great and I got a lot of respect, you're my idol, too.' And I went, 'God.' I don't know if he was working me or he just trying to make me feel good. But finally, I just got into the drugs and I was just wild. I had a pistol and I was going up and down the road, shooting my gun. Crockett and Flair pulled me in there and they said, 'We got to take this gun away from you.' What happened was, there was something that happened in Ric's personal life, it was medical, somebody close in his family had a medical problem, and he was going to take 3 months off and they were going to put the NWA world belt on me. The day that they fired me, we were going to do the angle on TV. I had a plane ticket, I don't know why I didn't fly, but I drove from Charlotte to Atlanta. I was down the road in a motel with Black Bart and Bart said, 'Come on, let's go to TV.' And I said, no man, I ain't going. I took a couple of valiums and just crashed. Dusty called up, Crockett called up, and I just hung up on both of them. Finally, when I did show up and walked in, I was the National Heavyweight Champion, Dusty walked right up to me and said, 'Give us your belt, you ain't got a job no more, you're fired.' To be honest with you, I could have gotten my job back that next day cause I had a meeting with them down at the offices, but I had an attitude problem cause I thought that I was "Nature Boy" Buddy Landell. My wife is glad that I got fired because being a drug addict is one thing, but being able to support your habit financially's devastating. You know, being able to go to the bank and get $1,800 out and get an ounce of cocaine, that's pretty wild. Long-term financially, it's cost me millions of dollars. My wife was glad that I was fired because she thought that I would have wound up dead somewhere, she thinks it was a blessing in disguise.

__JC:__ Going back to that specific point where you made a choice of staying in your hotel rather than going to the TV and then you lost your job. What were you thinking when you made that decision that has cost you a lot of things?

__BL:__ You know a lot of guys are doing the same thing to Bill Watts. When Jim Herd was running WCW, if Lex Luger didn't have a first-class airplane ticket and a limousine waiting on him, why by God, he didn't show up. I got into that mentality that I was a superstar, that I was to be catered to. Like they should come get me, but I just didn't want to go. It was self-inflicted and it was nobody's fault but my own. I try to use it as therapy. For a long time, I used it to bash myself. I can't answer why that I didn't go, why I would stay out all night and not come home to my family, I just can't answer questions like that. It's stupidity if you want to sum it up in one word.

__JC:__ Do you think a lot of the problems you had stemmed from a certain aspect of the business?

__BL:__ Well, for a long time, I blamed promoters, other wrestlers, I blamed everybody but me. The Buddy Landell scenario covers a lot more guys than just me in this business. It's like being an alcoholic, it's like being a drug addict, it's like being molested as a child, or whatever. I think going through the process of being healed, you go through a process of denial. Being in a bar never brought me a good time in the world, it just got me broke. You've got to look back at your situation and say, hey, I caused my problems. Wrestling was good to me. It took me out of Knoxville at a young age, put me in a worldwide spotlight and I messed it up myself. I was bad for wrestling, wrestling wasn't bad for me.

JC: How has the business changed since you started out?

BL: A long time ago, being in the wrestling business, we all rode together each night, we fought for each other if a fight broke out, there was camaraderie. There isn't that anymore. Wrestling always was a business for promoters. But the guys had a little love for each other. When you work for a guy like Bill Watts. You knew exactly what your position was going in. You knew what match you were on, you knew how high you were going to get in the organization. If he had great plans for you, he would let you know. But you wasn't going to go in there and run a rug over Bill Watts and steal somebody else's thunder. That wasn't the way that it was. Nowadays, guys are stabbing each other in the back, if you do something, somebody tells. It's just everybody's so stinking job scared and I relate it to them not having the talent to cover the ground they walk on. I think Jim Herd pampered a lot of guys. Bill Watts is the greatest thing that ever happened to this business. I think the guys ought to make more money. I liked the money Jim Herd was paying, but he paid some guys way too much money. I don't begrudge anybody for making a lot of money, but I think it should have been more even. Instead of one guy making $300 a night and another guy making $5,000 a night. I think that the business is going through a phase. When I broke into the business in 1979, there was like twenty territories. As of late, there was only two major ones and Jarrett. There's no new guys breaking into the business. To break into this business and be a good polished worker, you have to work consistently every night, and there's no where to get consistent work. Jarrett knows that, that's why he pays guys $200, $300 a week. There's Tony Anthony's working over there that will work for $40 a night and not open their mouths, and it makes it harder for other guys who want to come in and work. The worst problem in this business is the guys. If they would just have a little bit of backbone and stand up.

JC: Do you see that changing?... What future do you see?

BL: Let me make a prediction for the future. Atlanta is going down. Bill Watts is either going to buy Atlanta or open up Mid-South Sports, that's my prediction. And this will happen within the next year. When Jim Crockett was bought out by Turner, his clause was up in 1993. He'll open the Carolinas back up, it's going to go back to regional promotions. When that happens, I'm sure Dusty will probably go back down to Florida and reopen Florida. I'm sure that Verne might open back up. That's why Jarrett has been there for so many years, Jarrett could sell out every night, but he doesn't do that. He lets it get hot and then he cools it off on purpose. If you consistently take money out of towns, it's like raping them and economically, it's murder. So it's got to go back to the way it was. It's going to go back to the guys that can work, the Van Hammers ain't going to be able to get a job, and I'm not knocking Van Hammer, I'm just using him as a, I call it a spade of spade, when it comes to my business. Guys that can't work aren't going to be able to get jobs, except for underneath. A lot of guys are going to get their feelings hurt when this thing breaks and the guys that can work are going to be on top again. Vince McMahon will always be around, Vince is smart, he might go regional, he might cut back a little bit, but I think it's going to strengthen wrestling again.

JC: Do you think that this is the thing that can turn this business around?

BL: I personally like Ross Perot, I wouldn't vote for him for president of the United States, but he's got all the answers to the questions. It's going to take guys like a Ross Perot, which is a Bill Watts. This country needs what wrestling needs, it needs some foundation. Like it says in the Bible, if a man builds his house on sand, it's going to crumble, but if he builds it on a good, strong foundation, then when the storm comes, it's going to withstand. I'm 31 years old, Flair's about 44-45, I've got another good ten years to make money. If promoters open up regionally, they are going to have to take guys like me that can work and can talk. Guys like me, Arn Anderson, Ricky Morton, Jake Roberts, guys that can walk and talk. You've got guys that work, Bobby Eaton's the greatest worker in the business, it's not that he can't talk, he's just not comfortable talking on TV. Then there's guys who can talk great, and they ain't the greatest worker in the world, Junkyard Dog. But the combination of both those talents, are few and far between.

JC: Do you think that people still look at you and call you a "Nature Boy" ripoff?

BL: Tom Renesko was the one that gave me the idea. Ric Flair had always been my idol. It just so happens that when I bleached my hair, I kind of liked Ric. Buddy Rogers gave Flair the name "Nature Boy." And back in the mid 70s, Flair took a beating like I took -'You're not the real "Nature Boy," Buddy Rogers is.' Buddy Rogers, God rest his soul, he told me that he was a fan of mine, he told me he loved the way that I worked. He said it was ironic that through the years that he'd been in wrestling that there had only been three Nature Boys. He gave the name to Flair, Flair gave the name to me, and all three of us basically worked alike. So that was the highest compliment I think I've just about ever had in this business, both of them coming from Buddy and Flair, the two Nature Boys. I love the gimmick, but it was hard competing with Flair. Crockett wanted me to dress up like Flair, but I was wearing JC Penney suits and Flair was wearing the real thing. But like Terry Taylor told me, 'Fake it till you make it.' It was hard keeping up with

Flair. Just last night, I took my little girl to the matches with me, and people say, 'You're not the real Nature Boy, you're not Ric Flair.' I love that, man, because when they stop saying that, I'm done. As long as Flair's in the spotlight, I'll never die. It's a heck of a life that I lead, I don't make the money that I used to, but I still get the notoriety everywhere I go. I don't really have to stand in lines, I sign autographs everyday. Of course, I still promote myself in a creative way when I go out. I know little things to do to get attention and to keep myself in the public eye, locally. The guy that are in the business now, there's only two major groups. And the guys that are in those major groups, they are like an elite group. It's like, 'Oh, I'm here and you're not.' I'm just throwing a name out, Scotty Flamingo is working as opposed to a Buddy Landell not working. It would be easy for them to cop an attitude and get into this star mode. Bill Watts has done a gut check down there and a lot of guys have had a rude awakening. Wrestling's kind of exciting now, I'm sitting back just watching this whole thing crumble. But it's going to go back real strong, I'm confident in that.

JC: I know you've gone through many tough, unhappy times in your career, but what are some of the happier times in your career?

BL: I guess meeting guys, meeting Flair, Watts, Junkyard Dog, Jim Crockett, Dusty Rhodes, just meeting guys. It was the same way when I met Motley Crue, Guns N Roses, I met Aerosmith, I've met movie stars, you know. It was like I walked up like I was a mark. It's a people business, man, and when you start getting in your own little world, your own mind, and start really thinking you're something big; I've learned that all the blessings in the world come from God and if you do bad, if you get into drugs, and treat people bad, and crap on your family, and if you do all of these horrible things, how is God going to bless you?

JC: Going back to that match you were to have with Buddy Rogers (scheduled match for Joel Goodhart's cancelled TWA show on 1/25/92), how disappointing was that to find out that it was cancelled. Did you see that match as a way to get your career back on the right track?

BL: It was unbelievable. Buddy Rogers was worth ten million dollars, he absolutely did not need the cash. I had know idea that Buddy Rogers knew who I was, I had met Buddy a couple times, but I never had any idea that he knew my whole history. We got on a personal level. He said, 'Buddy, you deserve another chance, I'm going to help you out.' Buddy Rogers wouldn't get in the ring with anybody. He was 72 years old. So Buddy was going to help me out. We were going into that match and the angle that we were going to do was unbelievable. It was my finish, Buddy loved it, it was going to be great, turn me babyface and Buddy was going to be my manager. We had a $16,000 advance. I was staying with Joel, I don't know what happened to Joel, what got into him. I considered him a friend, I still do. I think that he could have pulled it off, we could have had a heck of a gate, we could have had a $25,000, $30,000 house that night. I was definitely looking at that to be a major role player in getting my career back. There will be a time for it, just like there was a time in the early eighties, and when it happens again, it will happen. I've got time on my side, I'm a youth, I'm 31 years old and I've been in the business 13, 14 years.

JC: Recently, you were working with Jim Cornette's Smoky Mountain Wrestling, but then you left. What happened?

BL: I like comedy in a match, it's hard for me to take wrestling seriously. These guys are out there clowning around, can't work. I'm a comedian, I love to do comedian stuff. That's where the guys mess up at, these guys go out there and they think this is a real wrestling match, 'I'm going to go out there and wrestle this guy and get it over with.' In this business, if you ain't got ring psychology, you're braindead. You go out there, lock up, put the babyface over with a couple highspots, heel gets the heat, babyface makes the comeback, go home. That's a match to them, they don't consider the fans whatsoever. Me, that's who I work, I don't work the match, the match is just a tool for me. To get over, the fans are the ones I work. I'm an artist, I can make them laugh, cry, spit, curse, love, hate, that's good raw talent. These guys ain't got a clue. Anyway, I was in an I quit match with Tim Horner, where the face sticks the microphone in your mouth and they say, 'Do you quit?' No, I don't quit. Well, that's what somebody else would do, but what would Buddy Landell do? So he put me in a hammerlock and then he put the microphone in my mouth and went, 'Do you quit?' And I sang, "Mooon Rivver." And then they stuck the microphone in my mouth again, and I went, 'What about them Sixers?' So I got the heat on Tim, I wrapped the microphone cord around his neck and said, 'I'm sorry, but Tim can't come to the phone right now, he's all tied up, but if you leave your name and number, The Nature Boy will get back in touch with you in about two minutes. So Jimmy (Cornette) got kind of hot at me, cut my bookings down to one shot for the month of September. And I had Jarrett calling me, Puerto Rico, and two or three other independent promoters. I was committed to Jimmy so I could not commit with anybody else cause Jimmy was paying me fairly decent, and be centrally located around here in Knoxville. He was disappointed in me and they weren't using me in the way that I thought I should be used and so I told Jimmy, let's just part. Me and Jimmy are friends, I call him, he's calls me, but that's what happened.

JC: Then you were working for Memphis, what happened there?

BL: They did the same old thing, the same thing Jarrett always does. He gets you to come over, then he wants you to work for nothing. I got my check and I go, 'Jerry, look, I can't come for this much money. And I'm driving 1200 miles. I've got a Mercedes and it gets good gas mileage, but I can't pay to come and work. He told me, 'I was talking to Vince the other day and he said if you stay straight here for a while, they'll consider bringing you up there.' I said, Jarrett, I ain't ever been to New York and if my only way to go to New York is paying to come to work here, then I guess I'll never be going to New York. Jarrett's using that place as blackmail to get to New York. He's got Dog

(Junkyard) in there, and Dog's unhappy because he ain't getting paid. Butch Reed's there and he got his first check and he's ready to leave.

JC: That's the reason why the talent comes and goes there.

BL: Oh, yeah. The last time that they sold the Memphis Coliseum out was in 1986 and I was on top. Sold out two weeks in a row. That was the 13th best match of the 1980s, according to The Wrestling Observer.

JC: How is it financially working for Jarrett (Jerry)?

BL: They gave me money bor gas. It's 400 miles from here to Memphis, then it's 375 from Memphis to Louisville, then it is 250 back to Knoxville. So it's actually 1,000 miles in three days that I would drive. But, here I am, I can only say that I've changed, unless I go to work somewhere and can prove it, it's just another lie, it's just another story that Buddy's telling. But if they know that I'm getting in my car and being on time, doing good work, showing up straight, if I do this over a period of time, then maybe they'll say, 'Hey, maybe Budro's really changed, man, let's give him a shot. I was pretty smart with my money, I'm not broke, I live in a $100,000 home, got an acre of land, I've got a Mercedes that's paid for, I live a comfortable life. So I can afford to drive down to Memphis, go to Louisville and come back, it was hard though. I'm 31 years old now, I used to take a lot of, not crazy Cactus Jack bumps, but I always took a lot of hiptosses and backdrops real high. Now it's harder to make these trips. We're talking about six pots of coffee as opposed to smoking 15 joints ten years ago.

JC: How would you feel these days if you heard people talking about you like, 'Look Buddy's no-showing again, he's back into the drugs,' etc?

BL: Well, a long time ago, I guess that would have really bothered me, now... I try to do right by my family, try to do right by God, and things, believe it or not, they work out. Just like I told Jerry Jarrett, I've got an uphill battle to fight. If I get in a car and drive 400 miles and I'm in the car seven hours, I've drank six cups of coffee, I'm going to walk in looking wired. So the first thing somebody's going to say is, 'Budro's back on it.' These are the people, that are saying stuff like that, like Jeff Bowdren that will call you up and say Hi to your face and then stab you in the back. It don't bother me, it doesn't matter to me anymore. For the rest of my career, if I was to come in a suit and a tie and carry a Bible with me every night, somebody's always going to say something. There's always going to be suspicions. When you've been an abuser, you're always going to be labeled that by somebody. So what you've got to do is be strong in yourself and know yourself that you're doing right. When you've got a problem, it's a cycle that you've got to go through; just like wrestling's got to go through a cycle, we've got to admit in wrestling that we have over-saturated everything and that we have to go through a building; just like this country; but that's what I'm doing in my life right now.

INTERVIEW
DAVEY BOY SMITH

JC: What do you think is happening right now to wrestling in the states?

DS: I think right now in the states, as far as the World Wrestling Federation goes, I think the people are getting a little bit tired of the WWF. And that's one of the reasons that the cards have been lacking in the WWF for the past several months. I've noticed a tremendous drop in crowds, especially in the major markets. It keeps getting lower and lower. Madison Square Garden normally holds 20,000 people and now you're lucky to get 5,000-8,000 people in there. California was a hot spot and now it's like really bad. In Chicago, I've seen a tremendous drop in the attendance at the Rosemont. I think that's one of the reasons right now that the WWF is in Europe because it's a brand new spot for Titan Sports. It's a brand new ballgame kind of thing. They are lacking entertainment in England, Germany, France, Italy, Ireland, Scotland, so we're like a whole new entertainment going over to Europe. And I believe, what I've heard is that WWF is going over to Europe next year for 145 to 150 days, which is almost six months. So I think they know that attendance is dropping quite a bit and now they have lost me, they've lost The Ultimate Warrior, The Big Bossman is finished after Survivor Series, I heard The Macho Man is finished after Survivor Series, and Earthquake. I just don't know which way the WWF is going right now.

JC: Why are you no longer with the WWF?

DS: I called up Titan Sports last week (11/2-11/6) and I told them that I wasn't happy with what they were doing with me. Then Vince McMahon returned my call in Boston, Massachusetts (11/7). We talked on the phone and I told him my problems, I didn't like the way things were going for me in Titan Sports. He called back Monday night (11/9) and he said, was I still feeling the same way? I don't know really what he was talking about because how can my mind be changed within 48 hours? And I said, yes. He said, "Well, if you still feel that way, then maybe you should go to Japan." I don't know if he was trying my bluff or not, but I have got things happening in Japan and England and I have not even scratched the surface yet of what I can do for myself. There's more to life, John, than the World Wrestling Federation. I've got two kids and a beautiful wife and I want to see more of them. I want to be happy with my job, and I wasn't happy with my job.

JC: What was making you unhappy with your job?

DS: Just the way I was being used. Like I was supposed to be at the Lennox Levis fight because he carried the flag for me at SummerSlam and then I was supposed to carry the flag for him at his fight as a favor to Sky TV in England. But they (WWF) pulled me out of that at the last minute.

Then me and The Hitman and Savage, we made a rap song, and I was supposed to go to England and do the PR work on that, but they (WWF) pulled me out and they're going to send Savage now.

JC: So they're kind of holding you back.

DS: Yes, that's what I'm getting at, John. For reasons, I don't know. Because I'm really powerful in England right now and I'm like the Hulk Hogan in the states. I'm not in it to play power games, I'm in it to make a living and be a wrestler. I've been wrestling since I was 12, I turned pro at 15, and I'm 30 this month, I've been in this business 15 years. And all I want is what I'm deserving of to come back to me. I've put a lot of time and effort into Titan Sports. They may have made me a big hero in England, but as soon as I come back to the states, I get mistreated, I think.

JC: Going back to SummerSlam, it being in England, do you feel like you were used for that event and then you came back and they slowed down your push?

DS: Yes, yes, and I told Vince that, too. I said, you used me for that event. Well, actually it was doing my four tours over in Europe. I had asked, where was SummerSlam going to be? And they told me, the Washington Cap Centre. I told them, I just mentioned, I don't know why you don't have it in England at Wembley Stadium. Then, I get a call saying we're going to having SummerSlam in Wembley Stadium. I'm not saying I orchestrated it, but I sure pointed out the idea. This is the way I put it to him, John, if you can sellout Birmingham, which holds 20,000 people, my hometown, if you can sellout Sheffield, which is another 20,000 people, if you can sellout London, and Manchester all in one week, in less than thirty minutes, that's 80,000 people. And they're still looking for tickets. I said, if you can sellout that in thirty minutes, you can sellout Wembley Stadium. And there was a couple people saying, "No, no, no, it can't be done." I said, I know how the English people think, I guarantee it will sellout. So I went over there with (Ultimate) Warrior, we did all the public relations work. I did TV, I did news, like twenty newspaper interviews, I mean I was talking from eight o'clock in the morning to midnight at night. I went on gameshows, I did like a million things. So boom, we go over there, we had a great show, which I think was one of the best shows Titan Sports has ever had.

JC: How has this interest in wrestling over in England come about, do you think?

DS: I don't think it's always been there. I think it's since Vince opened the eyes to them, and it's like, "Wow," and the big thing right now over there is the Gladiators (like the American Gladiators). It's like a whole new craze for the kids. Like anything, it burns out after a while.

JC: Right now, wrestling is hot over there. But like you said, everything burns out after a while, like what's happening to wrestling here in the states. Do you think that will also happen sometime to wrestling in England?

DS: Yeah, I think so, and quicker because it's such a small country. No matter where the people live, they're all like three hours away from the arena. They're only going to go see it so often. I think running 150 days (WWF's projected 1993 dates over there) is a long time to run over there. He's giving the states a rest. Hopefully for the business and all the wrestlers, it'll just keep going, because everybody needs work.

JC: What happened to you before SummerSlam? You were out for six weeks before the event?

DS: I was at home six weeks before SummerSlam. I was at TV in Worcester, MA (7/20), and I banged my knee. I was wrestling Mike Sharpe, I gave him a powerslam, and I banged my knee in the mat. I've gone from wearing those big tights with the big kneepads to the Union Jack type tights, so I don't have that heavy kneepad now. I limped into the arena the next day in Portland, ME, and I'm sitting there eating dinner thinking it was just a twisted knee and it's going to go away. And it was getting worse and worse, my leg was swelling. Then I can't walk, I was crawling on things. And I wasn't being helped to go to the hospital or anything. And everybody's like (whistles; meaning others weren't paying attention). But let me tell you something, if it was Hulk Hogan or The Ultimate Warrior or someone like that, there'd be an ambulance waiting for the them. Some guys have that kind of treatment, some guys don't. I went to the hospital, all the x-rays, they couldn't find anything wrong. They said, "Oh, it must be a pulled hamstring." So they put my leg in a little cast. I got back and said, Vince, I've got to go home, I can't handle this, I was in so much pain. And every time I stood up, the blood would run down and hit that infection and cause so much pain. I flew home and it got worse cause I went up in high altitude and now my leg was really blowing up. I got off the plane and Jim Neidhart picked me up at the airport and I went to a doctor, who referred me to a specialist. I went back and they said, "You've got Staphylococcus," the worst Staph infection you can get. It starts eating your muscle away, starts eating your bone away. But they started fighting it just in time. But to this day, I still have a bad knee. And they (WWF) every week to make sure that I was going to be at SummerSlam, to make sure I was healthy enough. And I said, yeah, I'm healthy enough. Which I wasn't, I just wanted that thought, I didn't want to let myself down and I didn't want to let Vince down, because he gave me that spot. I thought it was one of the best shows. We didn't have any stars there, that's what really bugs me, is when he brings these celebrities in for the Wrestlemanias, it just drives me nuts. We're the ones drawing the people, not these celebrities.

JC: What is the morale amongst the boys like while wrestling in the states compared to the morale of the boys while they're wrestling in England?

DS: It's totally different, it's like night and day. Everybody's in the dressing room eating each other's throats kind of thing. But the morale in England, the guys love Europe because the fans just love it.

JC: What's the morale amongst the boys like now with everything getting so low?

DS: I think it's pretty low. It sure was with me, I was losing interest really quick.

JC: What are some of the reasons why that's happening?

DS: Nobody realizes that until you can go home and sit down and you realize, you look back at things, and you say, I can't believe I was actually sitting in the dressing room and putting up with it. I mean you don't really need it, I just wish some of the other guys would stick behind the rest of us, then it would be a lot better.

JC: What do you think is causing this decline of interest in wrestling here in the states, the all-time low ratings, low houses, what do you think is the actual cause of this?

DS: I think it's because they've seen just about everything that wrestling has to offer. They've seen the same guys on top for so long, and it's just the same guys wrestling different people. It's like paying to see a movie over and over again. They're watching the same people. It's time for a change and I thought SummerSlam was going to be the big change, and I was wrong.

JC: Recently some people have been saying that Vince was going to go back to more athleticism and less gimmicks, like a change in attitude? Is he trying to do that?

DS: I actually think Vince is trying to go back to wrestling. Of course, that's the way they put it to me. Pat Patterson and Vince, they told me they're going back to wrestling, there's no more fighting outside the ring, no more using chairs. It's fine with me, but some of the guys in the territory, I think they couldn't go out there and give them a match without doing fifty clotheslines and fifty flying tackles. 50% of the talent right now can't do it. But the people in England, they just love wrestling. I just wish the people in the states loved it as much as they do over there. They appreciate a good wrestling match like me and Bret gave them. If you do that in the states, all you get are chants, "Boring, boring."

JC: The people over here love wrestling, too, but don't you think that Vince has educated the fans to gimmicks and not wrestling, and that's why this is happening?

DS: Yes, and now he's trying to re-educate them to wrestling, and it's going to take a long time, you can't do it overnight. The people have been through everything and I think to just give a wrestling match right now, they'd find it really boring. People want to see good wrestling, but what they pay to see is entertainment, they don't want to really see wrestling anymore. Because they've been educated to something else, and it's not like 500 people, you're trying to re-educate the whole United States of America. If anybody can do it, Vince can.

JC: What is your relationship with Dynamite Kid today?

DS: He's got a back injury and he had the knee injuries and he was never the same after that. He kind of lost interest, he didn't really want it anymore. I got an offer to come back to Titan Sports (10/90), and he didn't want to come back to Titan Sports. I don't think he wanted to do the traveling anymore because of his back. When he was wrestling for my father-in-law Stu Hart, he was happy doing that and doing Japan because then he would just fly over to Japan and he'd stay there for three or four weeks and he wouldn't have any problems. But he thought if he went back to Titan, he'd be flying all over the states, city to city, and it was too hard on his back. But I wanted to come back to Titan, so we just went our separate ways. I knew he didn't want to continue wrestling much longer anyway, he's retired now, plus he's five years older than me, so I just went by myself. He still wants to work Japan once in a while, and I hear through the grapevine that he might even be a manager in Japan, or train some of the Japanese guys. He still's got it in his blood. It's been so long since I talked to him, we never really talked since we separated. He went his way and I went my way. My mom sees him all the time, every other day (Dynamite Kid works on a road construction crew over in England, Dave's mother lives in England).

JC: Why did you guys leave the WWF back in 1988?

DS: We just had had enough, we were so burned out, tired. And we had left a good deal in Japan, so we wanted to go back. If you're in a territory so long, after a while the people get sick of seeing you, kind of. Okay, we had been in the WWF for four years and it was time to go back to Japan. And we left on good terms, and Vince said, "Anytime you want to come back, just give us a hollar." And when I saw Vince, in 1990, in Japan somewhere, he said, "Do you want to come back," and I said, sure. And I came back by myself. I had a good two years, but sometimes all that traveling is not worth its while.

JC: Do you think that you could have been more successful, business wise, if you guys still worked together?

DS: I didn't realize how popular we were. I was so young then, I was like 23, 25 then. I was too young and not smart enough towards the business part to realize what I could have done and established being a tag team. One of the main reasons I came back (to WWF) is because right then, Sky TV had just come on TV in England and Titan's got the TV show on there and they had no British guy, and then here I was, The British Bulldog. And the people were like, "Wow, we've actually got our own guy on an American circuit." So it was good for me and good for Titan, too.

JC: Since you came into the WWF in October of 1990, isn't your contract up now anyway?

DS: Yeah, my contract's up. But even if it wasn't, I asked Vince and he gave me his word that he would give me a release on my contract. It wasn't like a bad disagreement, I left on good terms.

JC: You seem to have a much slower style now in the ring, did your car accident have anything to do with that?

DS: It kind of slowed me down for a while because I had a couple bad injuries from that. Like my neck was really screwed up for a long time. I can't believe I came back as quick as I did. (The accident) was July 4, 1989, the same month as Beefcake's (1990) and the same as Adrian Adonis' (1988). I fractured a couple vertebrates in my neck, some pretty bad head injuries, left my eye a little bit lazy.

JC: How young were you when you started out in wrestling?

DS: I first started out in England when I was 15 (years old). I went from my wrestling style (wrestling in England) to the entertainment part (WWF), and now they're trying to go back to wrestling.

JC: When you started out at such a young age, you weighed about 180 pounds and then after the British Bulldogs tag team ended, you gained a lot of weight, and bulked up to over 250 pounds. It was quite a big jump and...

DS: I was trying to drop weight when I was working for my father-in-law. Then, after my car accident, I just said, screw it, I just went on the heavy weightlifting campaign. I was training with a professional bodybuilder from Canada, and I just went nuts, you know. I trained like twice a day, two hours in the morning, two hours at night, I was training like a madman. I was throwing weights around like you wouldn't believe.

JC: Was steroids involved at all in that rapid gain of weight, we're you using steroids during that time?

DS: I'm not denying I ever took them, I did take them, I've always admitted to taking them. But, for the past year and a half, I've been totally clean. That's one of the things that Vince said to me, about my urine tests, "You've always passed your urine tests."

JC: When did steroids become illegal?

DS: I think right up until about a couple years ago. Then it was under the food and drug act, but now it's totally illegal. So we all went off them, you maybe have seen a little bit of a drop in some of the talents in the World Wrestling Federation as far as the bodies go. But we all still try to do our best, I still go in the gym everyday and train hard. I think if you've trained like I have since I've been 15, and I've lifted heavy weights since I was 15, there's 15 years of hard training. Steroids or not, I mean steroids do help, but when it comes down to it, when you see these certain guys dropping in weight really bad, and you see me not even really dropping, people go, "Oh, we'll he's still on them," and it's like, F### you, I'm not still on them. If I was, I'd admit to it. And if I ever do it again. I don't need it because of all the heavy lifting. These guys, they all take them, and it's like, boom, they get a good quick body and then as soon as they go off, it's like they shrink up. Me, I've trained heavy and hard for years, and you just don't lose weight like that over a couple of months, you're heavy, thick muscle stays with you, I think.

JC: What exactly would you take steroids for?

DS: What it does is, when you tear down your muscle when you train, it rebuilds it twice as fast. It makes your body recuperate to anything twice as fast. So a knee injury, and you take them, you recuperate twice as fast. Sometimes you may not even get that knee injury because you were taking it.

JC: Did you take steroids before for your knee injury?

DS: No, I had to be totally clean. And I wish I could have done them to get my knee better. If I was taking steroids, I don't think I would have got that knee injury. I think it would have kept me strong, it would have prevented me from getting that knee injury. The only thing I could do was the stair-climber for my legs. I bought one of those and put it in my house. I did it as much as I could to keep it in shape.

JC: When you came back to the WWF in 1990, you were 275 pounds, were you on steroids then?

DS: I was just on the verge of quitting them cause I was at that weight where I had trained so hard, I didn't need them anymore. But, I would keep something, you know, standby, if I did get an injury, to keep me along. Then, it was legal, the doctor would prescribe it for you. I would go to the doctor and say, listen doc, I hit my knee or boom, I went through a windshield at 60 mph, and my body would be going into shock because my muscles were all torn up when my neck went through that windshield. The only way to get back on the circuit quick enough is to..... to do certain things.

JC: What were some of the other reasons you would take the steroids?

DS: More or less, I was traveling a lot and it would give me a lot more energy. Just keep me in shape, you know. My gimmick is to be a... I'm The British Bulldog. And I go in the ring and I'm built. That's what I think the people pay to see, they don't want to see some skinny guy go in the ring, I don't think.

JC: Back when there was a major steroid scandal that was covered throughout the media, Bruno Sammartino was on Larry King Live and made the comment, "Are you going to tell me that your Barbarian, Smith (you), and Warlord are off of steroids? Who the heck are you kidding?" How did you feel about that when he mentioned you name on there?

DS: I was really offended by it and it really made me upset because when Bruno was there, I always got along with Bruno and he always liked my work and he appreciated me, when I worked hard, when I went to Pittsburgh and gave the people a good match, he always thanked me for it, you know. So for him to come out and say that, after I was off them, and getting tested for them, it's like what the hell are you doing? Don't mention my name, I've never done nothing to you. Especially when you don't even know. Why doesn't he bring up his own kid's name. It made me upset that he would say my name after I didn't do one single thing to him. His beef was with Vince, not me.

JC: Did you like working the style you did when you were lighter or do you like your style now better?

DS: When I came back and I was 270, I was like the powerhouse. What's good for me is, I can wrestle any style, I can go in there with Warlord and have a strength match, and then I can turn around and go in there with Bret and have a scientific wrestling match or I can go in there with Curt Hennig or Shawn Michaels and have a highflying match. When I dropped that weight, I've been like 255, when I dropped that 15 pounds, I'm a lot lighter on my feet and I was doing a lot more moves. I can do all the aerial moves, but is it worth your while risking yourself when certain people don't appreciate it. When I get back on the circuit, I'm going to go back to that (wrestling as a sport). Today, I worked out for two hours, went to a Christening, then I came back home and I went on the Stairmaster for 25 minutes, so I'm trying to get my weight down to like 245, 250, so I can do all that aerial stuff again.

JC: Several months ago, when the steroid issue was being talked about, Steve Planamenta told newspapers that you had a thyroid problem and that you couldn't lose weight...

DS: Thyroid problem, when did he say this?

JC: It was during the summer, I think.

DS: Yeah, something was wrong with my thyroid. I think I was dieting too much, trying to cut down my weight, and my thyroid wasn't reacting. But that was nothing, really, my doctor got that fixed real quick.

JC: What are you going to be doing now that you're no longer with the WWF or any organization?

DS: I'm just going to go along and do some things by myself for a while. Not necessarily wrestling, I don't know, I've got some things in mind, I'm not too sure what now. I'm not bad-mouthing Vince, I'm not bad-mouthing Pat Patterson, or bad-mouthing the World Wrestling Federation. I talked to Vince and he said, "You know, you're a great worker, you're a great guy, and the doors' always open if you want to come back. It was a mutual disagreement. I was unhappy and he understood why, he just couldn't come to my agreements right now, and I thought it would be better if I just left. He said to me, "When you want to come back, just give me a call and I'll be in touch with you in a little while," that is the last thing he said to me.

The preceding interview with David Smith was conducted by the editor, John Clark, via telephone from Dave's home near Tampa, Florida, on 11/15. Thank you very much to David and his wife Diana for their time and cooperation. In the near future, Davey Boy Smith plans on going over to England to do commercials, sell vitamins, make special appearances, do fundraisers for cancer (his cousin died of cancer and many of his family members have suffered from it as well), work on a book that will be published concerning his whole life, and possibly be on England TV's British Gladiators.

The following interview with Paul Ellering was conducted by the editor, John Clark, via telephone from Paul's home near Minneapolis, Minnesota, on 11/6. Different occurrences over the past few months between Hawk and Animal have caused many feelings to be hurt and there was a period of time where they were not speaking to each other because of existing personal problems between the two. However, on 11/12 at a benefit in Rochester, NY, they met for the first time since their breakup, although they had spoken over the telephone before that. They hugged and talked like they are slowly resolving their differences. This whole situation has not only effected them and their families, but it has also effected a close friend of theirs, Mr Ellering, who in this interview, discusses his feelings about the situation.

JC: Since you have been with Hawk and Animal for the last ten years as kind of an inspirational teacher and leader, how have you seen their relationship change?

PE: Well, it's a lot like a family. I'll give this analogy; when they started out in wrestling, they were like kids who first had to learn how to walk. Once they knew how to walk, they crawled, then they walked, and then they ran. And you always grow up in any family and you see it a lot in the music business, people testing the waters and stuff like that, I think that's where it's sitting right now. I think that while they want their separate ways, in the end, if they ever get back together as a team, it might make them an even better team than what they were. Because they will have developed, instead of that they had a bond where they depended on each other, if they can develop a sense of independence and maturity about being able to do it alone, I think it may give then confidence, if they ever get back together as a team.

JC: How does this situation effect you? You've been with them along the many stages throughout the ten years. Even with them being at odds right now, they both have nothing wrong with you and have the highest praises for you...

PE: I sit back and listen to both of them and I can understand what each is saying. They were so successful for so long and I think I was a bonding agent for many, many years and I think if the split is a permanent thing, then I would guess that I failed at this stage, that's how I would feel. It does hurt me.

JC: Were they friends in the beginning?

PE: Yes, I think they still are. You see it everyday in any high pressured position. Familiarity breeds contempt and maybe that's what has happened here. We all know each other so well that little things add up to big things.

JC: What do you think has caused them to be at odds with each other?

PE: I would just say that it was a maturation process to where Hawk has decided at this point, he wants to go out on his own and he wants to test the waters. I'm disappointed that this has happened. But at the same time, I wish them both success, individually. I'm sad that it happened, though. I'm still friends with both of them.

JC: Is it hard for you to talk to them today and hear each of them telling you things about the other?

PE: No not at all, because my relationship with them has always been that way. I never repeat anything that the other person says. I felt my sole purpose in uniting the team was being a confident and doing what was best to keep the bond strong and keep it functional. They get in fights on the way home in the cars and stuff. If you've been around the business, you know that that just happens. It's just like kids, but we're adults and we can say, "Well, I want to do something different. We can make that choice and that's what has happened right now. But there is always friction.

JC: You've been with these guys for a very long time. With knowing them like that, do you think they'll ever be together again?

PE: Yeah, I do. If I had to put a time on it, I would say three years.

JC: Do you think all these things that they're saying back and forth to each other is all out of feeling hurt?

PE: Yeah, yeah.

INTERVIEW
JAKE ROBERTS

JC: Why have you recently departed WCW?

JR: My departure from WCW is a rather simple one. It is sort of a backlash from my time in the WWF. The only reason I left the WWF is that you're traveling on the road... I worked for the WWF for seven years, wrestling approximately 270 dates a year; puts quite a strain on a family life. My family was in need for me to be there and regardless of my career, my family is still number one because once this career's over, I still need my family. Therefore, that's the reason I left the WWF. I went to work for WCW and, unfortunately, at the time I went to work, they had hired a new vice-president, and I've never seen eye to eye with this man. But, my departure from there was a rather simple one also. I was having trouble with alcohol and drug addiction. Regardless of what people think about human beings, when you travel, when you expose yourself to everything that every professional athlete is exposed to, not just wrestlers, but basketball players, football players, anybody that's in the mainstream of life, or just take a look next door to your house because it's probably happening there too. What I was dealing with was; do I want to continue this way or do I want to do something about it. And I was at a point in my life that I wanted to do something about it, change. Change is not easy, but that's what I'm doing, I'm changing. Unfortunately when I informed WCW about my plans to go into a rehab; I went in under my own power, I went in under my own suggestion, nobody had required me to come here, nobody suggested that I come here. In fact, if there was any suggestion, it was that I not come here. Which is ludicrous, it's ridiculous. You think about it, if somebody's sick with cancer, what do they do? They go get it taken care of. Drug and alcohol addiction, this is a disease. It's not something people choose to do, it's a disease. And once a disease takes over a person's body, it's not a question of; do I want to drink or do I want to do drugs, it's a question of survival. The drug and alcohol does take over the person's body and it runs their life. The only thing that bothers me is the ignorance of people out there, I don't want to mention any names, but there are several publications, they come out and try to come after you like you're some bad person or some dog off the street. What the people at WCW and people around the world need to realize is that the Jake "The Snake" Roberts they've seen over the past several years is one that was addicted to alcohol and some drugs. When I'm clean and sober, I'm a much better athlete, much stronger, much clearer, much sharper. It's a choice you make, do you want to shoot a rusty gun and take a chance of it blowing up in your face or do you want a brand new rifle, and that's what I'm looking at.

JC: How do you think all your problems with drugs and alcohol started, and getting addicted to them?

JR: Well, unfortunately, alcohol addiction ran in my family. My grandfather was an alcoholic, my father had problems with some addictions. Addiction in alcoholism is passed down from generation to generation. Unfortunately, people will tell you that you can be anything that you want to be in life. Well, basically, that's true, but the problem is when you're born, you turn around and look and see what mom and dad are doing, and that's where you learn. And so chances are if you see somebody at home drinking when you're a kid, you pretty much tell yourself that that's okay, it's a good thing to do, that is what I'm expected to do. And people that are really smart realize that it not only goes from that point, but if you're raised a certain way, chances are you're going to raise your children the same way. Regardless of whether you're talking about drinking or you're talking spanking, or you're talking about don't eat broccoli, don't trust black men, you know, it goes all up and down. We are what we are shown to be. The apple does not fall far from the tree. If you see an apple on the ground, you're not going to be underneath a pinetree, it's an appletree, and that's the same way with human beings. My alcohol and drug addiction escalated, it's a progressive disease, it does not get better, it gets worse. As your tolerance builds, you continue to drink and use and that at some point, your system breaks down, that's when you become a true alcoholic. And you become unable to cope with life's problems, you become a slave to the drug or to the alcohol.

It's not the WWF's fault, it's not WCW's fault, it's not even my fault, it's just a way of life. If you go out there and want to point fingers and say, "Oh God man, what a loser," they'd better start checking their closets because alcoholism is the number three killer in this world today, and that is scary. So let the ignorant people point their fingers, but at least I'm honest enough to do something about it.

JC: How have these problems effected your family and friends?

JR: Family definitely suffers anytime there is an alcoholic in the home because obviously, you don't do the things that you should be doing and you don't spend the quality time that you could be if you were sober. Your children suffer and your wife definitely suffers. Watching somebody drink is not a pleasant thing, especially when they're an alcoholic, because they don't stop with one drink or two drinks, they stop when they're drunk and pass out. It's not pretty and they're a lot of scars. But the only way that you can heal is to stop, and that's what I've done. I mean I've shamed myself enough in front of my family, in front of my friends, to the point that I'd had enough. Once I reached that point, it was me turning myself over to find a higher power, not necessarily God, but to find something in my life that I could believe in that is better and bigger and stronger than myself, because willpower will not defeat alcoholism. If I had two more inches of willpower, I'd be a dead man. Think about it, lots of times you are out there looking at a problem and you get upset and angry, angry does not cure any problem. Especially for me, because a lot of times the problems that I couldn't put my hands on, I would stuff them inside of me. That's a dangerous situation because sooner or later the volcano's gonna blow.

JC: How long have you been going through these addictions?

JR: I've been going through this addiction for seventeen years, it's a progressive disease. What's amazing is that I held on for seventeen years.

JC: How would it effect you, being on the road a lot? Having to wake up every morning and go from city to city.

JR: Sometimes I suffered for days. It's hard to wake up the next morning, it's hard to work the next day, it's hard to go to the gym.

JC: A lot of the people that I speak to have commented that they have seen a decrease in your ringwork and maybe, your physical abilities. How much of an effect do you think your problems have had on that subject?

JR: I'm sure they had some effect, but the people also have to remember that after seventeen years of banging your head around that ring and after a couple of neck procedures, where they removed a disc out of my neck; that's what hurt me the most, I think. Having that disc removed from my neck, it limits my mobility and it also made certain things impossible for me to do. If people will look at common sense, though, you see any professional athlete come out of college and they hit the scene and they're blazing, but after seventeen years, they've lost a step or two. But where you lose a step or two, you also learn after years of experience how to get around the same problem by using your head instead of your body (his awesome interviews and gimmick). There's no doubt in my mind that when I do come back to wrestling, I will be physically fit. I will be healthier than I've been probably in the last seven or eight years. One thing though, I don't have to be a wrestler. I can do other things. My livelihood doesn't depend on wrestling. It's something that I enjoy, but right now I'm looking at a lot of other things to do.

JC: What are some other things that you are looking at?

JR: Well, acting. This character has been nurtured for a long time. There's only one person out there, other than myself, with the same box office ability, and that's Hogan. If I walk through an airport with ninety-nine other wrestlers, people are going to notice me. They'll pick me out, just because there's something about "The Snake" that makes them wonder.

JC: Through your problems that you've gone through, how were you feeling about yourself as a person?

JR: I hated myself for a long time. Anytime you hurt a family member or your friends or you feel like you're not measuring up to what you could be and what you want to be, sure you're going to have a lot of loss of self-esteem, and you're going to dislike yourself, you could even become suicidal. I think we all have, everybody in this world has thought about killing themselves at one time or another, just how serious you get with that is up to you. The only way I look at that was; if I was to do that to myself, there'd be a lot of people out there happy, and I just don't want to make that many people happy! (Joke)

JC: How tough was it going through those problems with being on the road all the time, away from family, friends, didn't it make it harder, I guess, being lonely?

JR: Yeah, professional wrestlers are always lonely. If you have any type of a family and all, you get very lonely, you miss your children, you miss your wife. You miss a lot of things, you miss your privacy.

JC: What are some of the other things that added to your problems, or even caused them?

JR: There's a lot of factors. Whether it was traveling, whether it was anger with promotion, or there was problems at home with my family, with my wife. An alcoholic will drink for any reason, whether he's happy or he's sad. I'd celebrate and drink, if I'd get angry, I would drink. For an alcoholic, there is no middle line, either he's happy or he's not. Somewhere down the line, that middle of the road type attitude that most people have, disappears for the alcoholic. Either he's going to be very excited or he's going to be very depressed. And either one of those places is not safe.

JC: I guess most of the time when you're on the road, after the match, you'd go back to the hotel, and maybe go to the bar. Was the bar a fun time for you or what was it for you?

JR: No, it was better than being in a (hotel) room looking at the ceiling and four walls, that's all. Most of the time, the bars were a pain in the ass. You've got people that are not letting me have my privacy, people that annoy you. But then, occasionally you run into nice people. I'm not saying that all people annoyed me, there are the people that come up to you and handle themselves in a polite, correct manner and treat you like a man. There's also a lot of assholes out there that just want to get next to you for what ever they can get for themselves. It's an (ego) trip for them, it's a male or a female, there's a lot of women out there that would do anything for you, but I'm just not into that. I just want to be alone sometimes, it's just tough. But you don't want to sit in the room because after a while, it gets to be pretty old. It's hard to be happy with yourself when you don't feel like you're doing the right thing.

JC: Did the fight you were involved in down in Florida have anything to do with your problems?

JR: That was not my fault, I was setup. Like I said, it's an unfortunate thing when you have money, when you have the stardom attached to you, then you are a walking lawsuit. Everybody wants something for nothing. Unfortunately this country has become sue happy. And it's like if you've got money and any type of notoriety, you're guilty because they would much rather point the finger at somebody successful than somebody who's flat on their ass.

JC: We've talked about some very unhappy things you've gone through, but what were the happiest times in this business?

JR: The happiest times were always when I was performing, I like performing. I liked working with WWF. There are always going to be things wrong, no matter where you go, but I enjoyed that time.

JC: What were your unhappiest times in this business?

JR: When I was traveling, and dealing with Bill Watts.

JC: You spent a lot of time with him in the early '80s down in Mid-South. Did you do any booking for him?

JR: Well, he's always one that wants to take somebody else's shit. He stole ideas, he didn't pay for them, but he stole them. You've got people out there that are innovators and you have people that are imitators, and I'm an innovator. I could do this business for the next hundred years because my mind never stops working. You've got a lot of people out there that have to watch somebody else do something before they can do it, but I'm the type of guy that goes out and invents something new. If I was to draw up a list of the things that I've started in this business that have been copied, it's a real trip. I used to get angry and say, what are you doing, copying my shit, that's not right. Then I started thinking, that's a compliment. It's also fun whenever I can walk up to that person and say, "Go ahead and use it, because I'll just think of something new, you can't." I mean look at how many have tried to do the DDT.

JC: But that time down in Mid-South in the early 80s with Bill Watts, what kind of experience was that for you?

JR: It was a learning experience, I learned a lot. I really perfected a lot of my wrestling skills there. Bill Watts has done some good things for this business, don't get me wrong, but we've got a big disagreement right now and I was treated very unfairly. The other way I look at it is I'm not going to make myself miserable thinking about what somebody has done to me, because in time, all that stuff comes back around. What goes around, comes around, and whether he knows it or not, somewhere down the line, he'll have to pay the price for the things he's done to everyone, and unfortunately, he can't afford that.

JC: Did you gain some insight towards the business from him while you were down there, though?

JR: No, no.

JC: Would you say that he gained some insight from you?

JR: I would think so. Bill Watts was great in the 60s and 70s, but this is the 90s, at least I know that, he doesn't, but I do. He needs to learn, he needs to go back to school. He'll have to sooner or later if he's to survive. Let's think about something here, if he was as brilliant as he would like to be, then what the hell happened to Mid-South. Case closed.

JC: Well, you worked with him ten years ago and then you were working for him recently. How would you say he's changed?

JR: He hasn't, he has not changed, he's that same person, and that's what's going to be hard for him to get through. Plain and simple, the only way I would ever go back to WCW is if Bill Watts was not there. I don't have to work for anybody. Two things a wrestler can always choose; his family and where he works. And any person that does not respect a man's health and a man wanting to get help for any health problem, than I don't need to work for him. If you don't respect my family enough to pay me the money that you owe me, than I don't need to work for you.

JC: Would you say that you handled the situation properly with him (Bill Watts). I guess, of course, you wouldn't be able to make those shows when...

JR: If a man is shot in the head, does he need to go to his employer and say, "Hey, I need a month off to get this bullet out." F****** ignorance. That's ignorance. I did not pick the day to get sick, I did not pick the time to get sick. If he can go to sleep at night knowing that he's wasted a great piece of talent, if he can go to sleep at night knowing that he has stolen money from someone, than that's good for him (sarcastically). It shows what kind of man he is, though.

JC: He went on TV and announced that you had left WCW because of personal problems and that he supported you in your decision...

JR: "Personal problems and I'm supporting him." What kind of support is firing someone and then taking their money.

JC: How did he take your money, though?

JR: There's money that WCW owed me from shows. And I was informed that he would fine me $1,000 (his nightly pay for work) daily, until my money was gone. What a nice man. I don't feel like it's unfair to be fired, don't get me wrong. The bottom line for me is that it's his right to fire me anytime he wants, but to take money that is already owed to me, is not. He says I breached a contract by not showing. Well, again, if a person has a bullethole in his head, how can he show up? If you will check the laws, there was a law passed in September that says that alcoholism and drug addiction is a disease. No different than cancer, no different than heart. It's serious. Would you rather have me driving a car drinking a twelve pack or case of beer? Do you want somebody out there on the road like that? Hell no. And that's why I took myself out. I did not feel like I was good for myself, good for my family, or good for this business because I was not handling myself properly. If I had got in the ring and wrestled drunk or high on some type of drug and I would have crippled myself and broke my neck or killed someone or kill myself, what does that prove. It proves I'm pretty stupid.

JC: Has that ever happened before or an incident like that?

JR: No, no. Fortunately, I was always straight when I was in the ring. Maybe hungover, but straight. I usually saved my drinking and problems till afterwards.

JC: How often do you see these problems in this business? Do you think the business has a problem with it?

JR: There are drug problems all over the world. I think everybody has a problem with it. Not just this business, but it's all over. Let's talk about society; has there been any majors doing drugs or drinking. How about our new president, did he ever smoke marijuana? Oh, but he didn't inhale it! Okay, well what a waste that was. This business is no worse than any other business in the world today. There's going to be some people that do and some people that don't, and it's going to be like that. Hopefully, children are being educated better towards drugs. And thank God that it's become the uncool thing to do, to do drugs. That may have been part of the thing that helped me decide to pull the switch on myself. I grew up in the 70s when drugs and alcohol were cool. I was part of the late 60s generation, free love, drugs, I mean that was it, you were happening. My problem was that I never changed. Now in the 90s, thank God almighty, they're saying, "Hey man, it's not cool to do this shit anymore." So now maybe the kids will get a better shot at it today. They're educating them in school, they're telling them that it's not good for you, and it's not healthy, it's not the thing to do. Unfortunately, I grew up at a time when it was the exact opposite and boy, I ate it up.

JC: How much influence did your father (Grizzly Smith, a WCW road agent) have on you with wrestling?

JR: He didn't. I was never around him, growing up. The only way he influenced me was by telling me I wouldn't be able to do it. That's all the motivation I needed to want to do it.

JC: He didn't push you to be a wrestler at all?

JR: No, not at all. He was never around me when I was growing up, I lived with other people.

JC: Did you ever have anybody there reaching out to help you with your problems with drugs and alcohol? Did anybody like promoters, friends, or wrestlers try to help you?

JR: Well, I think the WWF's testing program did help a little bit. You always have a couple of friends that might express concern, but I'm a grown man and I make my own mistakes.

JC: Do you think that their objectives for their suspensions are more to help the person or to maintain a good reputation for the company?

JR: I made mistakes. That's unfair for me to call. You know, they suspend people and it's up to the individual to get help. Maybe sometimes we expect too much.

JC: I guess during your time in the WWF, you tried getting help before and I guess, it didn't really work. Why is it working this time?

JR: Well, I was asked to get help by someone. There's a difference between somebody asking you to get help and you wanting help. Sometimes our willpower is too strong and we think that we can handle ourselves. People have to be ready to turn their life over to a power greater than themselves, and that's the key. For a long time, I thought that I could handle it. I didn't think it was a problem. You just have to learn. It's no different than learning how to wrestle. If a person opens his mouth his first day there and says, "I'm the greatest that ever lived," what a mistake he's making.

JC: So you're saying that before, somebody else was trying to push you. It's like you weren't doing it on your own, and that's what has to happen?

JR: Exactly. It's got to be by your own wish, it can't be by somebody else telling you to go, making you go, your wife wanting you to go, your family wanting you to go; it doesn't work that way, you've got to want to help.

JC: Did you reject those people when they tried to tell you that or when they wanted you to get help?

JR: I felt that I could handle it on my own, that it wasn't that big of a problem. It was my own ignorance. I didn't understand what was going wrong with me. I felt that I could take care of it or I just didn't want to take care of it, or I needed it, or for whatever reason I did it. That's the bad thing about addictions, no matter if it's drugs or alcohol. Addiction in alcoholism are the only diseases that tell you that you don't have a disease. They tell you it's everybody else and that your just fine. Whereas cancer, it lays you flat on a bed or whatever, and then you know you need to get help. But with alcoholism and everything else, they'll tell you, "No, you're okay, man, it's their problem." They just don't understand. But, there comes a time when you'll have to look at yourself, and that time had come for me.

JC: Would you say your problems with drugs and alcohol put you in your own little world?

JR: Sure. I always felt alone. It's a very lonely world, sick world. Your drug or your alcohol becomes your best friend. That's just the way the disease works. It makes you do away with everything that you really love in life. It separates you from those that you love and it separates you from the things that you love. It takes over you and runs your life. A lot of my problems came from alcohol and from pain killers, due to neck surgery. Broken bones, neck surgery. Not only have I had one surgery, but I've had five or six neck procedures now. The doctor gives the pain pills and a lot of them are... It's prescribed medicine. It's not like I was going on the street looking for pain pills. These drugs were prescribed, and with a mixture of alcohol, they have give you a desired result. Total Euphoria.

JC: Up until you went to Titan Sports, you never really had the "Snake" gimmick. Was it you who came up with that idea for Titan or was it Vince who created it?

JR: Well, it had been an idea of mine for a long time. And unfortunately, nobody thought it was a good idea. I called Vince McMahon when I was working for Bill Watts. I had given my notice to Bill Watts. Vince McMahon had approached me three years earlier, when I was doing the booking in Atlanta, when it was NWA, Georgia Championship Wrestling. But, I was not ready to go. Another mistake that I made, I should have went (to WWF) then, instead of going through Texas and having hard times there and then going back to Watts and having more punishment and hard times there and then going to Vince after that. I wasn't making money (working in Texas and for Watts).

JC: So was it you who came up with the whole "Snake" gimmick?

JR: Along with McMahon's help, sure. He asked if I'd be willing to do it, and I said sure, why not? It has worked for a long time and it always will.

JC: Do you think there has ever been any situations where things involving the snake have gone too far?

JR: I didn't particularly like Earthquake sitting on it.

JC: Did you feel that what happened at Halloween Havoc went too far?

JR: No, I didn't think that was too far. After all, what is too far, you know?

JC: I guess some things like the Sgt Slaughter angle with the war and everything, people felt that crossed the line.

JR: That was a bit too much, I thought. But you're talking about a snake, and me carrying the snake, and I'm not talking about going out and sticking it in somebody's pants, either.

JC: If you had a choice right now of what you wanted to do in wrestling, an announcer, a booker, a manager, or a wrestler, what are you looking towards now?

JR: Pet owner!! Maybe I'll buy McMahon out!! I'm just having fun. Right now, I'm not trying to think about my career, I'm thinking about healing. People have to understand that anytime you're dealing with alcoholism addiction, usually addiction in alcoholism are just symptoms of a true disease. That's not the real problem. The real problem was having too many child issues when I was a child and I didn't understand that growing up I had a very mixed up life. And now I'm able to deal with that. Some people stuff the pain, are successful at it. Some people aren't. I wasn't successful at stuffing the pain because I had too much to stuff. Sooner or later, that pain has to come to the top. When it comes to the top, then you medicate it, and that's what I did. I medicated the feelings that I had, the unhappiness, the hate, the anger. Growing up, I wasn't from a mother and father. I went several different roots through my childhood. People out there should realize that their children are a lot smarter than they think. They suffer a lot more than people think. Parents actions will really formulate a child's mind. That's why Jake "The Snake" will always claim to be society's child. Maybe that's what drove me hard some time with being bitter about my life. And it drove me to do a lot of things that I don't think I would have done had my childhood been different.

JC: What do you think is happening with WCW right now?

JR: I think that Bill Watts is negative for this business. I think he's a very selfish person. I think his ideas are 60s and 70s, not the 90s. I think Dusty Rhodes is a great man and could be a great booker, but it's hard to do anything when you've got 30 or 40 pounds, or in Bill Watts' case 300 pounds of lead tied to your ankles.

JC: When you say his ideas are ideas from the 60s and 70s, what do you mean by that? What were the ideas back then?

JR: The 60s attitude was, intimidate, bully, make someone do something. And that was not only in wrestling, but that was just a way of life. They were killing the Kennedys and Martin Luther King and Malcolm X. I mean sooner or later, that shit comes to the top. And that happened in life and yet, you have somebody trying to rule the same way now with athletes that are much smarter, much brighter, and deserve a lot more than they're getting. Wrestlers are the most underpaid athletes in the world, no doubt about it, and abused also.

JC: Why don't you think there's been a situation before where everybody in a certain company works together and with each other to achieve the same goals?

JR: Why hasn't it been done? Because you've got people out there that are selfish and you've got people that are jealous and you have people that don't have talent. And they're willing to do anything to keep a position. I mean this business is not based on raw talent. This business, unfortunately, is based on whoever the booker is deciding to go with. To give that athlete the television. TV is a tool. It's just how you market the product. Vince McMahon's a wizard at marketing a product and Bill Watts doesn't have a clue as to how to market a product.

JC: Where do you think WCW was headed under Kip Frey?

JR: I don't know. Kip doesn't know this business, either. Nothing against Frey, he's a brilliant man, he's a lawyer, but I don't have a lot of faith in people that do not understand the business. That would be like asking a young child to drive a race car 200 miles an hour. How much success are you going to have?

JC: Do you think that he had it half-right? Do you think he had the right attitude towards his employees?

JR: He had the right attitude towards the athletes, I think. He gave the athletes more for what they'd done and Kip had more respect.

JC: With all the talk over contracts and everything, do you think the guaranteed contracts were a problem, because it seemed you did have guys there that wouldn't work because they knew they were getting that money no matter what?

JR: Oh yeah, but you're going to have that in anything. That's what's wrong with society today. In the workplace, you have unions that are protecting people that don't work. Unfortunately, you're going to have people that want a free ride in anything they do. I mean you have policeman that do their job and you also have policeman that are crooked.

JC: Do you think the morale in WCW is the main problem there?

JR: It's very poor. A lot of it's morale, a lot of it's direction.

JC: Do you think WCW has a direction right now?

JR: Well, I don't know. I think Dusty Rhodes has a lot of good ideas, but he's got to be able to implicate those and not just come up with great ideas and have them cut off by whoever's cutting them off. And I can't say for sure who it is, but I have my own ideas.

JC: Well, as you said earlier, wrestlers are the most underpaid athletes in the world. So right now with the business the way it is, with the major companies having financial problems, how can these companies pay the wrestlers more?

JR: Yeah, I always know the business.

JC: So do you think it's fair for the wrestlers to get great money when the company would just continue to lose money?

JR: I think that wrestlers have been underpaid for so long, and anytime anybody gets any money, I'm happy for them. But, then again, I would want to see the guys perform, you know, make what they earn. And commit themselves to doing the things... You've got most of the guys that don't mind going out and performing. There's always going to be a few bad apples. I was in love with it (performing). It needs to be a love affair.

JC: What do you think is happening amongst the boys now? Are they all at each other's throats with these hard times?

JR: Sure, yeah. Well, it's going to be like that anytime you do anything that's not a team sport, you're going to have guys that want to cut each other's throats. The whole idea for promotions is to divide and conquer, that's why there's not any unions.

JC: What do you think has to happen for wrestling to break out of it's current bad state?

JR: I think they've got to bring back the excitement in it and they've got to get new talent.

JC: And how do you think those changes will come about?

JR: When they get tired of losing money, they'll start reaching out and looking for talent again. But unfortunately, what happened was when the WCWs and the WWFs took everything over, there wasn't anymore small little breeding grounds for new talent, and all of a sudden, there wasn't anymore new talent. Where are you going to learn? Certainly not in Memphis!

JC: What is your attitude right now towards the business?

JR: I'll always love wrestling. But, just like a marriage, sometimes you can love a woman but you can't live with her, too. It would take something very special for me to decide to commit himself to a company, whether it would be WCW or WWF.

JC: Do you have any feelings that you've been burnt?

JR: No, no. I let things happen to myself. Nobody can do anything to me that I don't let happen to me, so who's fault was it? I mean there were things that I didn't feel were right, but then again, I let them happen. But, I'm not letting anymore happen. I'm not bitter, I'm just saying, the next time around will be different. I've learned a lot about myself. I have to be comfortable with myself. I talked to some people last night that wanted me to come wrestle some place and I said, well, this is what I want and this is what I do. They said, "Well, we can't do that," and I said thank you very much for thinking about me. I appreciate you and it's a compliment for you to call me, but I'm comfortable with my own talent. I don't think there's a wrestling company out there that does not want Jake Roberts.

JC: If there was any time in the future where you were asked to or you decided to drop the snake gimmick, where would...

JR: That's funny, because people think that the snake is what made me money. It's amazing that they think that I don't have talent now, I don't know how to wrestle, I don't know how to do an interview. That's ignorance, that's totally ridiculous. I can be anything I want to. Carrying a snake to a ring does not make a wrestler. That's like saying, "Okay, we'll put the snake in Joe Blow's corner and he'll be a great wrestling star." That's silly. Jake "The Snake" is Jake "The Snake" and if it works, why change it. It's unfortunate that certain people tried to destroy a proven piece of talent or a proven idea because they can't deal with their own jealousy or it's because they don't want to see it threaten their position. I mean, if you've got the fastest race horse, why shoot that one. It just doesn't make sense. But, it'll all come back. That's one thing that's consistent about life, we do repeat our past. I got tired of repeating part of mine, and that's the part that I'm not going to repeat.

The preceding interview with Jake Roberts (Aurelian Smith Jr.) was the second part of an interview that was conducted during the first week in December. Part II was conducted by the editor, John Clark, via telephone from Jake's home near Atlanta, Georgia on 12/6.